



ETERNAL LOVE

by
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illustrated by
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"Everything will not today, and again more. I am
reworking me."

Written By
Mitsuo Takahagi
September 28-October
Black Type U

Illustrated By
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February 18-February
Black Type A

His soul or gets a ring me for the rough and sandy hills
I'm looking now!

ETERNAL LOVE

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English translation by
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ETERNAL LOVE

ETERNAL LOVE captures every single moment of a couple's passion and joy in a beautiful, hand-crafted, hand-blown glass sculpture. The sculpture is made of clear, hand-blown glass and is a masterpiece of art. It is a perfect gift for the bride and groom, or for the couple's anniversary. The sculpture is made of clear, hand-blown glass and is a masterpiece of art. It is a perfect gift for the bride and groom, or for the couple's anniversary.

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100% Glass
100% Glass
100% Glass

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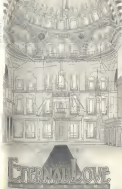
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Other recommended reading
List 98

Only the King, 4 vols. (Kings III)
The Fourth Ring Finger

Don't Worry About

The Man Who Doesn't
Take Off His Clothes vol 1-2

Cold Sleep

Little Darling

4. No Reader: The Space Between
Vol 1: Stranger

Secret Admirer

Cupid Kiss

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Part 1: Eternal Love

Chapter One

Totomipuku's eyes slowly opened, the beds as heavy as if they'd been glued together. A bright light forced against his head and he blinked painfully.

He groaned. Where was he? What had happened?

Totomipuku pressed his fingers to his temples and looked around at his surroundings, trying to piece together what was going on. It took his brain a moment to process what it was let new.

He obviously wasn't in his hotel room, since the total bed state *is* here a canopy. His eyes drifted from the cold and marble rooms deliriously uncomfortable woodboard to the pure white silk curtains, whose golden fringe whispered hypnotically whenever it moved.

A blanket brushed his skin - it was of such superb quality and softness that he wished he could stay wrapped up in it forever. But a noise meant caught his attention and, concerned, he followed it out of bed. He felt his first good look at the room when he stood up. It took his breath away.

"I... I don't believe this," he whispered.

An elaborate pattern of intricate flowers and leaves was spread across the ceiling of the room. It'd level of opulence and color that Magnificent

crinoids and sculptures were displayed on decorative carved dishes, too valuable for Taniguchi to even gaze at their prices. It was all so far beyond his experience of his ordinary life.

Expensive cut glass crystals had been placed on each of the tables scattered across the room. And at each had been set vases of crinoids. That seemed to be the source of the uniquely powerful fragrance.

A writing desk was set beside the main window, two ornate-stuffed easy chairs on either side of it. Taniguchi stepped across the carpet that covered the floor to the window.

What he saw outside gave him another shock.

He caught sight of an extravagant fountain spilling water over its edges in the center of an enormous garden, throwing up clouds of sparkling mist. The snow-scented perfume drifting past it, blended in both notes by both that mist, and the fragrance by above made for a pleasing mixture.

But it wasn't the garden that caused Taniguchi such dismay. It was what lay beyond the garden making Tetsuya anticipate the sweeping loss of its horizon, over the desert stretching out endlessly in all directions.

How did he get to a place like this? He searched his sluggish mind, trying to remember what had happened to him.

Taniguchi worked for the planning department of a trading company. He had been on an extravagant business trip to England upon the request of the international sales department of a subsidiary in the

country. The clients would be discussing the deal in English and Arabic, so they needed someone fluent in a those two languages, someone they could trust they'd picked Taniguchi.

He had finished a glass the day after he received the invitation, so it was clear how urgent the deal was.

He didn't mind the flight, which was more than 12 hours long. He just relaxed, watching movies and reading, and in no time he was in London.

He'd been told that someone from the sales department would be waiting to meet him at the airport, and so he had waited in the lobby.

While waiting, a man had called out his name.

"Mr. Taniguchi?"

The man had shown Taniguchi a company I.D. (his name was Lawrence) so Taniguchi had followed him to a limousine. Taniguchi had thought it odd that Lawrence had come to pick him up in such a nice car. He probably should have been more cautious, but at Lawrence's polite urging, he'd quietly slid into the back seat.

He never expected to see the man who was waiting inside.

The man had smiled at him, a champagne glass in his hand. "It's been too long," he'd greeted.

Taniguchi had been overwhelmed. All he could do was gape.

"Are you going to say something?" the man had prompted.

Taniguchi had remained silent.

"It's been six years," the man had said.

A confused, confused, Tomoyuki had no sense of purpose pushing his chest under the man's down stare. He tried to say the man's name but he couldn't speak. He could only mouth one word: "Why?"

"I've come to get you, just as I promised Aired," the man had explained.

Tomoyuki had been mesmerized by the man's collective smile.

The man had grabbed Tomoyuki's arms as pulled him close. By the time the approach of the man's lips had brought Tomoyuki back to his senses and he began to struggle, it had been too late.

A handkerchief had been pressed to his neck and he'd been trapped under a sheet by a man's weight. He'd struggled to escape, but only briefly. His vision had cleared over and his mind had grown fuzzy, and he'd been blacked out.

Tomoyuki had no idea how much time had passed since his abduction. When he'd awoken, he'd found out the England where he'd gone to negotiate a business deal, but a nation's oasis in the desert. It was like he had transported to some strange world.

The Tomoyuki's occupation was placed his mind as if on TV many times. The man there, an oasis in the desert which was the richest of the United States from a nation. Its wealth included both its natural resources and its national economy. Madras was one of the world's leading tourist destinations. It wouldn't be too far of the man to claim that everyone in the world had seen Madras's landscape at least once. Thanks to all the rich coverage of the country.

"You haven't changed at all!" Tomoyuki heard a voice say behind him.

He spun around. The speaker was the man behind it all, the one who'd brought Tomoyuki here. Tomoyuki wasn't sure how long the man had been standing in the doorway, one hand resting on the frame, watching him.

"Aired," Tomoyuki repeated the man's name slowly.

Aired's hazel eyes brightened. He took a step from the doorway and approached Tomoyuki. He stood straight, distance measuring Tomoyuki's body with his eyes. Uncomfortable, Tomoyuki drew back, and Aired naturally caught him.

"Welcome to Madras, my home," Aired said coolly.

Tomoyuki hesitantly shook off Aired's grip. He hadn't come here for a vacation. He was more interested in Aired's reasons for doing this.

"You don't look well. How do you feel?" Aired asked.

Aired? Tomoyuki spun back, his lips drawn tight. As far as he was concerned, it was too late to contemplate anything now.

Aired frowned. "Are you still feeling the effects of the drug?"

How was Tomoyuki supposed to keep control of his tongue when Aired was grabbing his chest and staring at him so intensely?

Aired shook his coffee brown, his eyes and skin the color of honey. The man's features of his handsome

face blazed at his coming. Tomoyuki glared fiercely at Azeai, who was still peering at him through those slanted eyes. Azeai had always been a man justifiably proud of his looks, but his maturity had given him more dignity than when they had known each other before. Tomoyuki quailed just at that late hour.

Azeai was dressed casually, but even so, no other man could have rivaled the elegance he achieved. His hair alone betrayed the skill like any master of his face, turning such vibrant life as that shaped Tomoyuki knew, only inches from his ignorant man's face.

"I was frightened by a doctor," Azeai said, those slanted eyes now any one's affair. "His is clearly showed concern."

Tomoyuki wanted. He looked away, wanting Azeai to know that the man had affected him.

"I'd like to know why you did that to me, on another," he said. His voice was as weak as he could make it, but in reality, he felt as if his legs were going collapse under him. He wanted to know why Azeai had dropped him and brought him to Madama without an explanation, although he didn't expect to be satisfied by any of the excuses he would hear.

"What I did that?" I already told you—because, promised I would," Azeai replied without the slightest hesitation.

Tomoyuki's eyelashes fluttered at the "promise." It took all of his strength to hold back a shriek. "Promise? What promise?"

Good. He'd wanted calm.

Azeai's mouth twitched in a smirk. Who knew

what he was imagining.

"I thought you might say that," he said. "That's why I had to tell you. I didn't want to, but you've always tended to keep people at a distance, once you decide you want to."

Tomoyuki glared at Azeai, resentment flooding his features. He was desperately trying to act reasonable, but his inner change in Azeai's expression set him off. He was in no mood to hear the man who had betrayed him as if they were the best of friends.

"First, he stopped. "I don't care what your motives are as long as you send me back to England right now. I was there on business. This is going to ruin everything up."

"Oh yes?" Azeai regarded Tomoyuki, his left eyebrow arched high. Tomoyuki was startled by the old sinister gesture. Azeai had always done that when he had something to say. "There won't be any problems in that that give. The rules were completely clear."

"Indeed?"

Tomoyuki's resentment collapsed in the face of his completely unexpected response. What did that mean? Did Azeai mean that the negotiations had been directed simply to get Tomoyuki to come to England? He was sure that Azeai would as the man was, had also figured a reason for why he hadn't contacted his office yet.

An unpleasant fury boiled up inside him. He didn't care about Azeai's reasons. They didn't matter anymore. Whatever reasons Azeai made, the man had betrayed him. And there was no justifying the fact

that Tomoyuki had to stay in Mishima.

"Let me go home," he said. "I must go to be along with your whole world." He pushed his chin into Azei's hand and pulled away. But Azei didn't let him get away. Tomoyuki left a large hand on the back of his neck and he was strongly pulled back. Azei?"

As soon as he opened his mouth, Azei's leg closed on it. Azei's tongue penetrated his mouth, squeezing, pressing, and turned over his mouth. His struggle and another hand fastened onto his leg.

"Hag."

Tomoyuki pressed against Azei's chest. If he knew there was a life prison in the world. Just in old times, he was in the party of Azei's coming here, considering with the heat of the desert.

Azei's tongue laughed with Tomoyuki's eyes. It tried to pierce the covering creature. Then the skin, the skin of his mouth. Each time Azei changed angle, the skin became more visible. And then ten years ago disappeared so if only a moment had passed.

Azei was the only person who could love Tomoyuki next, something and satisfaction with nothing but a love. It was like one all to just one time.

"Ah."

His knee gave out. But Azei's leg never in contact with his. Azei held Tomoyuki against him. The man's lips continued to consume the Japanese man.

Tomoyuki was high-headed by the time Azei finally released him from the kiss, pushing one leg out on his upper leg.

"My hand," Azei whispered.

That was what Azei had called him before, too. Tomoyuki's body was already trembling with the dream. Azei had ignored. But those words reached him in the sun.

Faded moon "pearl" or "measures" in Azei's. Six years before. It had been Azei's pet name for Tomoyuki.

Tomoyuki squeezed together the sheets of his skin. One remained and pulled away. From Azei's hands, which had begun running up and down his back. He couldn't let himself be overwhelmed. His waist stood to make the same motion again.

"Tomoyuki, Azei began.

"Let. let me go," Tomoyuki gasped.

He moved his right hand and whipped it in Azei's chest. The snap-sound echoed across the room. The moment Azei's hand on him loosened, Tomoyuki took his chance to be a look of utter contempt on his face.

Azei touched his chest with his fingers and started. "I didn't realize you hated me so much."

"Did you think I loved you?" Tomoyuki, that look, looking away from Azei. His eyes were flinty as he murmured. "I would be alone."

It was worse being in the same room with Azei right now. He wanted to be alone so he could think rationally.

But Azei took no notice of his protest. "What will you do when you're alone?" He're in the middle of the desert.

Tomoyuki glared pointedly at Azei, fumes of

Ariel had always told Zofia that, and Tomoyuki had no doubt that Zofia intended to continue with her policy. Because the two of them had visited Japan, the country's situation was slowly beginning to change in Zofia's mind.

Tomoyuki remembered what it had been like in Moscow. Many things had happened, but overall it was over as if it had all happened in a moment. Now it had brought about a number of changes in his life. Without question, the biggest change of all was that of standing in front of him now.

He never would have imagined that result when he first came to Moscow. No, it was still too early to call this an outcome. Everything was just beginning now.

The letter wrapped up with words very like the characteristic of Aofia.

"I pray that you will think from time to time of your poor father who has his blood just under the surface and is waiting for the sunny you might be."

Tomoyuki folded the letter back up and he read it back. "We were very cruel to Aofia," he said.

A lot of words came over Ariel's face as if he wished to say that.

"Why don't we have Aofia come out here. One of these days," he suggested. "The sooner the better and my relatives forget about me. She doesn't even do it."

Tomoyuki agreed.

There life on the island was completely unstructured and the inhabitants were all kind. Tomoyuki felt guilty—it was so peaceful. The fact that they were living together here without interference

was already—the fact that something he had believed in for so long had become reality—he was still reluctant to accept it. He couldn't shake the feeling that they should be facing some sort of harsher payback by now or that it would suddenly disappear again. He was still too wrapped up in what had happened six years ago.

"Oh." A cool windup struck the top of his head. "It's raining."

As he glanced up at the sky, rain fell in gentle droplets over his face. The sky had lost the hint of blue color and the sun was completely hidden by clouds.

"Let's go." Ariel took Tomoyuki's hand. Tomoyuki stood up and hands still joined, they moved their cottage.

Halfway back Tomoyuki remembered the book he had been reading. He had set it aside on the table. "Oh, I forgot."

"What?"

"My book."

He disengaged his hand from Ariel's and went back to pick up the book. He shook it out and it felt as if it wouldn't get wet and at exactly that moment the rain opened. Rain pelted the book and he had to close it as if it were the quality of rain and Ariel's voice over the sound of it.

He ran back to where Ariel was standing and when they reached the cottage, they were both completely soaked.

"Ugh, how horrible."

Ariel laughed at Tomoyuki's pathetic look of misery.

"It's not a big deal," the Japanese man said, laughing at him. He let him stand on his knees under his shirt and sat it down on a chair. "What's more, if we get wet? It's not like we're practicing math."

He walked toward the bathroom. But, taking the first step, he couldn't go any further.

Azazel had taken hold of his wrists of politeness back. Azazel looked at him defiantly and brought a small, white towel to wipe the hair stuck to his neck.

"Take your clothes off here," Azazel said.

Tomoyuki searched for an answer but he couldn't think of what to do. He gave no more thought to what to say, but Azazel expected an answer from him. He paced down into Tomoyuki's eyes, almost urging him to be quick.

The Japanese man hesitated, flustered, but he didn't understand why. "What are you saying?" The face of a dog got off him.

That the face was already wet. He didn't know what to do.

Of course Azazel knew that, and he gently shook his head. "I don't care if the face gets wet. I'm thinking about that shirt clinging to your wet body."

Tomoyuki's eyebrows knitted up, but he didn't understand what Azazel was saying.

The wet shirt sticking to his skin had just felt uncomfortable, but Azazel's words caused a different sensation to grow inside him. He realized that his shirt had become transparent and that Azazel was not worried of his shirt poking through it.

Azazel gazed with narrowed eyes at Tomoyuki. "Take off your clothes. Or would you rather I take them off for you?"

"Take them off himself, at least Azazel stop here?" If his clothes were going to come off here, he preferred to take them off himself. Tomoyuki felt him gathering at the base of his neck as he took hold of the base of his shirt. He slipped it over his head efficiently and dropped it on the floor. When he passed, Azazel's eyes pushed him to continue. He pulled his pants and underwear off together almost desperately. When his legs were free, he threw the clothes at Azazel. The man caught them in one hand and lowered Tomoyuki over with the other.

Tomoyuki shook his head. He'd obeyed as far as he could, but Azazel's face.

Azazel watched Tomoyuki, now lying down on the same spot, then moved over to him himself. He stopped where a few inches away from him, looking at Tomoyuki's eyes. In his gaze fell from Tomoyuki's chest down to his chest. He had no more to say. His stomach. His stomach. He had no more to say. Azazel's hand and Tomoyuki took a deep breath.

It was hard to stay composed. But he didn't want to make the first move, so he bravely made a move.

The first move was the center of his body. He felt that his hands and down to his feet. When Azazel's face had returned over his entire body, it returned to the other.

Tomoyuki's heart thudded as Azazel's palm touched his chest.

"You're warm," Azazel murmured. A small

played at the corners of his mouth. "I know too well that we wouldn't melt, but you seem pretty sure right now."

A small cry escaped Tameyaka the quail stifled it, but it was useless. Shivers were running down his spine as Aseel stroked his chest and pressed down against the flesh of his neck.

"Can I help you get rid of all this heat?" he whispered.

"Ah! Tameyaka cried out.

Aseel began to ruble at his collar. At Tameyaka then turned against Aseel's chest. He tried to push himself away again immediately, but he couldn't. His strong arms closed around him.

Aseel caressed Tameyaka's damp neck. His lips brushed Tameyaka's shoulders and his large, hot hands ran over Tameyaka's skin. His fingers brushed across Tameyaka's back and gripped his hips, and Tameyaka couldn't resist anymore. He wrapped his arms around Aseel.

"Aseel."

Three tongues increased shaking as well as offer a tremor, and they felt tangled together with his fingers.

Aseel took off his clothes with Tameyaka's super help. They sought out each other's nakedness, and his captiveness that flared up every second.

"Aseel."

Tameyaka was on top, pressing his tongue against Aseel's body like that from Aseel's bare chest to his stomach, arriving at Aseel's navel, where was the

where. Wrapping his hand around its length, Tameyaka used its tip. Aseel's organs twitched in response, swelling as he worked. Filled with love, he used every technique he knew. He licked carefully from the tip down to the base, and then slowly pulled Aseel into his mouth with his tongue.

Tameyaka

Aseel's breath came faster. His stomach heaved and he tightened his hand as Tameyaka's hair. The wet of saliva, Aseel's desire excited Tameyaka, too. As he continued to work his mouth over Aseel, Tameyaka began rubbing against the inside of Aseel's thighs without making a sound.

"Yes, yes."

Spiking the base of Aseel's penis with his fingers, Tameyaka bobbed his head up and down. He could feel Aseel pulsing inside his mouth as if Aseel would explode at any second. Aseel's hands slid down Tameyaka's back as Tameyaka had thought it the pleasure of giving pleasure to Aseel.

"Tough."

Aseel's fingers suddenly darted between Tameyaka's butt cheeks, and he jumped. Aseel brushed his fingers over the opening.

"Hot."

Ignoring Tameyaka's attempt to hold him back, Aseel plunged his slick fingers inside. Tameyaka couldn't concentrate on working on Aseel while he was being shamelessly exploited. He pressed his cheek against Aseel's organs and focused on the fingers penetrating his body.

Flashing in and out, rubbing against his little wails, a cresset, twisting just twisted up inside him.

"Ooh."

"I want to hear you. Let it stretchable with." Agel whispered next to his ear, and a shiver ran over Temeryale's skin. Agel's fingers had been prying open him, and now they began drawing out the pleasure, slowly but with a sure movement.

He smiled. I want Agel, who knew his body as well. Temeryale gripped the fur and surrendered his body to the pulsing pleasure.

Agel pulled his fingers out. Temeryale closed his eyes, but in his obduracy, and Agel let out a laugh. His honey-colored eyes were wet with desire.

Temeryale lay on his back, involuntarily. His hands were on Temeryale's knees and spread his legs wide. Temeryale felt Agel's eyes on him and his fingertips stretched across his arms because he was so overwhelmed as out of anticipation.

"Temeryale."

Warmth flooded his opening. Temeryale let it in high and Agel pushed inside, not making him sit. Agel spread him open as he pushed inside, making it impossible for Temeryale to hold back here.

"Ah, oh, Agel."

"It's okay. Just stay still."

"Ugh."

It was only at the very beginning that Temeryale felt any pain. Once he'd been fully opened, Temeryale's inner walls along to Agel instinctively as he became deeper.

Temeryale threw his head back in the pleasure, and the pleasure of being slowly penetrated. Agel pulled Temeryale's legs closer to him as his chest heaved, panting.

A voice strained with pleasure dropped out of Temeryale as the pleasure built up deep inside him.

Once he began to feel pleasure inside him, it only grew more intense the longer it went on.

"Temeryale... it's so great being inside you."

Agel held his hands firmly in place, fastening against them. Temeryale naturally to Temeryale's eyes as Agel rubbed against his inner walls and stimulated the groggy state inside him. Agel bent over him and buried a knee in his temple. He licked away a tear, and a cry caught in Temeryale's throat at the touch.

"Ah... ah... yes."

Temeryale's back, laid the way as he twisted under Agel. A few moments later, he went at the moment of his pleasure. He wrapped his arms tightly around Agel's waist and kissed him. His mind went blank and his entire body was filled with the emotion. Every part of him was connected to Agel.

"Ah! It's coming!"

Temeryale began pushing back with his hips, answering Agel the way he liked it. The feeling that he needed her in him even just a moment longer hurried with his desire to reach his limit as quickly as possible.

Agel.

Agel wrapped his hand around Temeryale's thigh.

"It was just now."

The machine was immediate as Tomoyuki did, they had been here together.

"Tomoyuki."

"Yeah."

He closed tightly around Asei. Asei moved even more violently against Tomoyuki's in stable manner. Tomoyuki couldn't even speak any longer. It could only be things happen to him. Asei looked from closely and pushed against Tomoyuki's breast.

Asei groaned. The inside of Tomoyuki's back was covered by the person spilling out of Asei's embrace, pushing member. Tomoyuki was pushed to new height. His body pulled itself into a little bay.

Asei held Tomoyuki at his waist as he pulled onto the rug. He stroked Tomoyuki's hair and pinched kisses onto his cheeks and eyelids.

"That was amazingly good." Asei gasped.

It was a long time before Tomoyuki could respond. His heart and body had been changed and he didn't want to move as much as a finger. He lay of with Asei, but it was even better after this. It had felt. He could feel the tenderness emanating within him. All three bodies had been pressed together in love and personal dream.

"I love you my friend."

Tomoyuki felt warmth spreading itself all over his body. He kept surrendering with his love for Asei.

Tomoyuki lay beside Asei in bed, joining it.

He seemed as Asei typed.

After they had moved from the rug to the bedroom, they had closed off. When Tomoyuki had taken up, Asei was already up and using the computer. He was looking at data on making areas in Africa that he had purchased. He had to analyze the soil areas to see if it was possible to harvest crude oil from certain areas.

Ever since they'd begun by the wheel, Asei had been analyzing data like this while he corresponded by email with a partner company in England.

Of course, the fact that the oil company was dealing with the former king of Malawi was a top secret project.

The fake business they Asei had designed with Tomoyuki's money was real. That meant Tomoyuki would be loaned to the oil company for the holding process in order to cover for Asei.

"Have you decided which money you want to hold?" Tomoyuki asked.

"More or less. But we have to hear what the other party has to say, too." Asei replied.

Tomoyuki nodded as Asei pointed to one of the maps on the screen. The oil company had started three or four years for metal holding. The more Asei was thinking, it was one of them.

Tomoyuki was sure that they would agree to the business Asei wanted, without any problems, but the other part would be deciding on what percentage of the profits that company would receive. Tomoyuki would probably discuss it directly with the oil company's representatives when he went to England.

"Leave the negotiations to me. I'm the professional," he said.

He pressed against Arai and Arai took it as a challenge to his arms.

"I know how good a businessman you are, Arai," said

Tomoyuki. "I feel you had accepted to go along with a kiss on the temple. What is, being working in Japan, but if been forced to take every number of dishonest projects and had made them at least. He loved himself a decent businessman."

He lay his own hand over Arai's. "Mitsuo, I'm afraid."

Arai looked at him, surprised. "What is suddenly all of a sudden?"

"The thing is . . ." He felt a little nervous and chose his words carefully before proceeding. "I would be honored if you choose me to be your partner in all difficulty and poverty. To share and to hold."

Arai turned an eyebrow. "I was going to."

"Arai."

It was almost uncharacteristic how easily Arai had accepted Tomoyuki's proposal, but hearing the old boy of made his heart flutter with joy.

Tomoyuki tried to imagine his life after 1890 with the man who would be not only his lover, but also his business partner. The path he would walk with Arai probably wasn't going to be smooth, but it would definitely be incredible. No matter what obstacles they faced, they would be able to overcome them together.

"I look forward to working with you," Tomoyuki

said in the formal Japanese style.

Arai played along, bowing his head and smiling. "I'm lucky to have you."

Then they caught each other's eyes and burst out laughing. They laughed heartily and fell onto each other. Tomoyuki gave Arai his lover a kiss and he gave Tomoyuki a steady

There couldn't be anything better in this entire world than having the only man he loved, the man who loved him back.

Afterword

Hello is a ma, Sakana! It's been a while since I wrote anything for MIT Press—but here I am again, with an *Arbutus* tale!

I was completely reassured by the Harbinger books, so when my editor asked if I'd be interested in doing something *Arbutus*, I jumped at the chance.

But there are a lot of birds obstructing the *Arbutus* view, aren't they? What are you up to now?

Whenever I write, a lot of questions come to mind, like why are these particular people doing these particular things? I got so wound up that it turns out like a high school student's diary—a first grader's, even. But thanks.

Even when I was busy doing other things, *Arbutus* images were always at a corner of my mind for two months, maybe. I think I understand now what it means to think about something "night and day."

So now I have a large sense of accomplishment, or would say I feel like I've climbed Mount Fuji and seen the sunset—I feel totally refreshed.

But I think my editor worked even harder than did! Words can't express how much help she gave me in really sorry for being so helpless! I hope she'll keep writing up with me.

up!!!! (as I said)!!!!!! I hope someone
will at the discussion. I was so happy that you were
also the Andean setting. I at last you readers for the
same way! I gasped when I saw how beautiful the
event was done. Thank you, Mr. I hope the pro-
cess is great at even though you're so busy!

And thank you to all you readers out there
picked this book up. (the) Considering the work, I know
this is even more serious than usual. I hope it comes
at a little—but would make me so happy.

I'll keep working hard in 2007, so do a
good thought of me!

That's all for now.

Maria Tereza



being brushed off. He would have liked to ask about it, without doubt. It was that he was in the middle of a dinner.

"Unfortunately you have no choice but to wait here," Arai said.

He reached his fingers out to Tomoyuki a few centimeters, but the Japanese man jerked his face away before Arai could touch it.

"I don't care if this is an exam. Tomoyuki says stubbornly. "I'd rather stand outside in the desert than stay with you."

Tomoyuki? There was a hint of warning. Arai's voice as if he was talking to an unruly child. If he wanted to realize that Tomoyuki's feelings were going to change anytime soon and, perhaps, he took step back. "I'll come again tonight. Do all your best in before then."

Tomoyuki didn't answer. He struggled not to look at Arai as he felt his fingers with the man he disappeared beyond the door. But as soon as the door shut and he was left alone, he was overcome by fatigue and he collapsed onto one of the many chairs. His hands, legs he and could not touch the floor of his shirt, but he still couldn't catch his breath. He took several deep breaths, convinced that hot sand was clashing in his throat.

Arai al-Murad

He dressed himself in a new robe while studying in Oxford in England. He had been studying mathematics at Cambridge University when he met Arai, who was



matched single same department.

Azumi's elegance and dignity had shown, not him, at the center of attention. His frightening handsome, massive features were somehow unlike those of the typical Middle Eastern man, and it was curious that he came from the red blood. He was supposed to be the son of an old farmer, or the son of a local king, the slough of an ancient tribe. There were rumors that there were bodyguards around the campus even when it wasn't there, and at night in. Every imaginable story had had its version.

No one knew anything for certain except that he was a student of the United Nations University, but the doubt & suspicion the nearest response showed to him. He continued to be an object of awe, and despite Tomoyuki was no exception, always watching him from afar.

They might have been in the same department but their social positions and pattern of view were worlds apart. Normally, nothing would have ever gotten their reason to speak to each other.

But one evening, everything changed.

There had been pouring down in sheets for hours and Tomoyuki was looking for shelter when a black car stopped in front of him. The window of the back of the down and Tomoyuki was shocked by whom he saw behind him.

—Mr. Makabe.

He was even more shocked that the legendary Azumi al-Blooded knew his name. He was sure he looked like a wild shot, staring at the man.

Azumi granted Tomoyuki a glimpse of the world

that was said to have changed women the world over.

Let me take you down. The figure was Tomoyuki's darkness for after immediately.

That's all right.

He didn't have the courage to share a ride in a chauffeur's limousine yet. And besides, it would only take five minutes to get to his door if he ran.

But he'd got out of the car and stood in front of Tomoyuki's residence in the rain. Then he took Tomoyuki's hand and led him to the car as if he was meeting a lady. Confused by Azumi's polite gaze, but also feeling a hint of pleasure, Tomoyuki couldn't possibly refuse. He slid into the car, finding like he was floating on a cloud.

It took one week for "Mr. Makabe" to become "Tomoyuki." Another month for Tomoyuki to realize that he harbored homosexual feelings for Azumi. And six months after that, when Tomoyuki's swelling concern had melted to nothing, he finally arrived at his courage to admit to Azumi. He finally asked Azumi's name and the last of a dear friend, which he had feared too much to tell, until then.

—But don't let each other answer. I don't think of you as a friend anymore.

They were in Azumi's room when Tomoyuki confessed. Azumi wrapped his right arm around Tomoyuki and pulled his head toward him.

Don't you want to hear my answer?

Azumi showed no surprise, just smiled.

No.

Tomoyuki turned his face away, lips drawn.

right. Really, he was so nervous he felt his heart would leap out of his throat.

—What if I told you that I want to be your *do-i-want-to-be*?

He hadn't thought Azeul would be that casual. It had taken so much courage to confess in the first place that Tomoyuki couldn't stand to be embarrassed even more. He would be lying if he said he didn't hope Azeul would say yes, but he would never have admitted it.

Azeul smiled at Tomoyuki's silence.

—There's no hoping it.

Azeul wrapped his other arm around Tomoyuki.

—I find the name.

So that was what people meant when they talked about being on cloud nine. Puffed by the passion of Azeul's words and body, the days after were like he'd been in a dream. Azeul couldn't have been kinder. There was a kindness to his personality, but Tomoyuki loved even that deeply collected. He gave no thought to what lay ahead of them. Azeul liked his mind and later always occupied his thoughts.

But one day, exactly a year after they'd met, Azeul suddenly returned to his country. That was when Tomoyuki first found out that he was from Madrid.

—When things calm down I'll call you. I'll come back for you.

Azeul's words had been brief, but Tomoyuki had believed them then. He'd wanted to believe them. Nothing motivated escape excepting the anxiety that had

long since been threatening like a dark cloud.

But Azeul's take long to realize that he had been right in saying Tomoyuki was on the verge of the long of life—he was borderline and that Azeul had taken on the role of savior. The name that Azeul was the king's only son and heir to the throne came as a shock. And because his mother had been English, he was now the subject of world interest. The last king of his country to have foreign blood.

Just as Tomoyuki had recovered from the shock of that, he heard news of Azeul's engagement. His mistake had the words to describe his feelings at the time. The news had shocked him. That somewhere inside himself he'd decided that the engagement was inevitable and he had given up. He couldn't keep hoping for a happy ending to his relationship with Azeul. Dreams were exactly that, after all—only dreams, and he'd just woken up. He'd felt another, completely alone. Tomoyuki made himself watching the Tomoyuki who was to end.

After that, Tomoyuki never had another moment. As a result, his grades became excellent and he'd gone back to Japan to graduate at the top of his class. He'd spent the last five years at one of the universities in Japan. He worked excellently and was paid, third above the rest. His performance caught the eye of his superiors.

He could find his work. He heard that the studio offered in their commercial value. And Tomoyuki's work that time had been to hear the proposal for a contract from a certain British oil company, which was

seeking sponsors for a credit-all drilling project.

Azumi couldn't possibly have arranged all that

"What does he want with me now?" Tomoyuki growled.

He couldn't help feeling hostile. After a long years, he'd begun to think that Azumi had forgotten him—so what did the man want now?

He thought about how Azumi wept. Tomoyuki was accustomed to the man's character, his exploitation, however. His fury grew.

Azumi's tears were actually so dry that years ago someone that he felt he was being burned someone's deep mark his body. His fingers brushed his lips. The were still tender, even aching. He felt it was wrong but all he could think about was fired.

He must not have been in his right mind and it was several moments before he noticed that someone was knocking on his door. Tomoyuki shook the thought from his mind and stood up.

He drew closer to the door, cautious of the lockset handle. "Who is it?" he called out.

A woman's voice answered in polite Arabe. When he opened the door, a woman wrapped in a thick shawl smiled at Tomoyuki.

"My name is Sana," she said, "and I will be serving you during your stay here. Please tell me if there's anything that you need."

Arabe women usually cover everything but their faces. He could tell that Sana was about 30. Her

features were typical of an Arabe woman's, but her back, you were talking.

It would have been much easier to tell her that he didn't need any help and that she leave, but Tomoyuki knew that that wasn't really acceptable. This was tedious. If Tomoyuki refused her, Sana would not be fulfilling the duty her master had given her.

"I had food prepared for you," she said politely. "I will lead you to the dining room."

He noticed for the first time that he hadn't eaten as much as a crumb in a very long time. But he wasn't feeling hungry. He had no idea if it was a side effect of the drugs or if his just wasn't feeling well because of the stress.

"I'd rather not," he said.

"Shall I have the food brought here instead?" Sana inquired.

"No," he said, refusing her second attempt. "I'm afraid I'm not up to it. I'm going to lie down. Please don't go to any trouble for me."

"But," his master asked me to prepare quite a lot of food for you, Sana protested.

It bothered her not to be able to carry out orders. Tomoyuki wasn't sure what he could do to help, but that is what came to him. He still didn't feel like eating, but he did want to reach himself. "Can you take the food back?"

Sana's face lit up at Tomoyuki's request. "Certainly."

His master had also replied that she walked out of the room in light dress. A different sound seemed to travel through

Please follow me, the new maid said.

He left the room and followed the maid down the house stairs. The palace may have been a second-hand residence looked away in its time, but it was not shockingly retrograde. The architects seemed to have exhausted the limits of luxury, from the ornate balconies close next to the pillars covered in newly worked oak. The huge white mosaic looked like mosaics. A round dimly painted panel like that arched across the vaulted ceiling was a highlight.

The fact that he was in Matsuo, in the Middle East, finally registered for Tatematsu. He was impossible far from England, not to mention Japan.

"How are you?" the maid inquired.

A pair of double doors swung open. Tatematsu peered at the sprawling looking area he saw through the billowing clouds of steam. Round pillars were spaced evenly around the room, and in between their dark flutes of more descended into a semi-circular the area at a point in the center of the pool was a statue of a lion, hot water pouring out of its open mouth.

Three maids were waiting inside. The new one Tatematsu hesitantly stepped into the room, the surroundings and started slipping his clothes off.

"Hey hold on!" he shouted in Japanese, surprising the women.

He spread his hands wide in apology, since that had after all, done nothing wrong. "I'm sorry that I prefer to do this myself," he said apologetically.

There confusion was infectious. In Matsuo, he

know it was probably customary for maids to help with bathing, but Tatematsu simply couldn't submit to that. He had no idea how to tell them that, so he just asked to be left to bathe alone.

He wasn't sure how they took that, but it was important that he be alone here, and he felt greatly relieved when the maids left the room.

Tatematsu felt a little guilty for having the huge bathtub all to himself. That thought made him realize just much of a connoisseur he was. The family had been part of the upper-middle class in Japan. Money was no longer in the lower edge of the upper class, but no matter how wealthy he was in Japan, it was nothing compared to the way of life in Matsuo.

He stepped out in a corner of the bathtub and closed his eyes. A faint scent of rose flowing up from the water and he began to relax, despite his situation. He'd heard that in older times, there were flowers in the pillows of some commoners that ran with rose-scented water. That people washed their hands with it. That was like the upgraded bathtub version.

Everything here seemed to belong to a world beyond all imagination. But that was how Asael lived everyday. Even if a normal talent in Tatematsu, it was just a part of themselves left for Asael. Tatematsu let out a sigh.

After he'd taken a leisurely wash in the bath, he washed his body and hair. He returned for another long wash afterwards, but had to cut it short when he started to get dizzy.

He climbed the steps and returned to the

denoting men. The cool feeling of the marble on its sides of his feet was wonderful, and for a moment he forgot his fatigue.

Several little baskets set to one side of the chairs, of clothes caught his eye. They seemed like something, the girls of the office would like. Little glass boxes decorated with delicate roses. They were filled with amber liquid.

He opened the top of one and brought it to his nose. It smelled like a sweet perfume. It was too delicate to stand in his feet on the body. It didn't seem to him. He explored the cap, along his shoulders, and a single slipper slipped into the clothes that had been prepared for him. The soft nightgown seemed his skin wonderful. But he thought it looked like lingerie and he is uncomfortable. He didn't like clothes that were all the way to his feet.

It was nothing like a pair of pajamas. And certainly not like a pair, hard and Tennyson—they shared nothing in common. Flipping the buttons on the top of Tennyson had trouble deciding between a cream shirt and the bed that wound up cleaning the chair. He drew her glowing body into it and closed his eyes.

Ariel's hair brushed up on his head.

Furrow

Ariel had called out to Tennyson in the last voice in his life. An expression, sweet voice as if he were with affection. There had been a time when just before that voice had made Tennyson happen then he would say

He had himself in the memory of Ariel's

hand striking his feet

"Ariel"

For Tennyson, that was a special name. Until thirty-one years ago, anyway. Unusually Tennyson got to know the real Ariel only after the man had left. He had been deeply shocked by the differences between the Ariel in his heart and Ariel of Marsden. He couldn't deal with it, and in making the Ariel in his heart had been the only way to protect his self respect.

He thought he'd succeeded—until today.

He remembered the light touch on the back of his neck. He had loved being touched by Ariel. When Ariel touched the back of his neck, a love was sure to follow.

Tennyson snapped his eyes open. He saw Ariel looking down at him, dressed in a masculine shirt, touching the back of his neck with your fingertips.

"I liked the way you used my hands, in your dream." Ariel whispered softly, his eyes flashing.

Tennyson felt as if Ariel had pushed into his soul. He quickly stepped Ariel's hand away. "Surprised completely, he rose from his chair. But before he could get away, Ariel grabbed his arm and pulled him back.

"I lost you elsewhere for months," Ariel said.

"It shows a problem with that?" Tennyson shot back. He needed to stay down. He didn't want Ariel to know that the man had the power to upset him. "I don't need help taking a bath. Besides, it's embarrassing."

"Embarrassing, huh?" Ariel stared at Tennyson, as if that was their common ground, and smiled. "To the point where, when the way you were yourself at me?"

Tomoyuki knew if he got apart he would be playing right into Arai's hands, but he was obstinate. He could imagine what Arai was thinking about right now. Now that they were no longer together he wanted to forget about the things they'd done & he, they had been happy together.

"Say my name again," Arai whispered.

Tomoyuki's face went red and he let his tongue pretend not to respond. He didn't want to obey Arai.

"Harada."

He stubbornly ignored the electric shocks and twisted his eyes away to signal his refusal. He pretended that he had forgotten that old name. He must have up to Arai because the man took hold of Tomoyuki's chin and turned Tomoyuki back to face him.

"Say it if you'd like to stop my pain," Arai ordered.

"What an arrogant thing to say. It wasn't I, it was Tomoyuki, that came here by choice. Since he refused to face Arai, Tomoyuki glared at the other as defiantly.

"So if the shock of pleasure makes it, it's okay?" he asked with sarcasm. "That just makes it even more curious as to what the shock wants and consumes like me."

As his voice rose to anger, one corner of Arai's lips twitched up maliciously.

"I thought I told you it was to fulfill my promise," Arai said.

"Are you not satisfied with one look, then? I'm sorry that I don't have time to permit just to visit

your pain," Tomoyuki snapped.

"That isn't a joke," Arai retorted.

Tomoyuki smiled with as much defiance as he could muster. It seemed that they were not talking about the same thing. "Well, it's a six-year-old punch line."

The regrets and wounds of the past had become a cauldron for Tomoyuki. He hated what a fool he had been, and he hated Arai for giving him no explanations. Although when it came right down to it, Arai apparently didn't consider him worthy of an explanation.

"Push him!" The words disappeared from Arai's face. He looked Tomoyuki over coldly and, still holding the Japanese man's chin firmly, brought his lips close.

Pressing insistently, Tomoyuki jerked his head back and fell into the chair. Arai pushed him down against the chair, holding his head with his left hand and forcing him forcibly. In using the Japanese man's face left and right, he forced Tomoyuki's mouth open and forced in his tongue.

Tomoyuki's hands twitched, clenching Arai's hair-down shirt. He should have resisted this, but before he refused it, he was clinging to Arai. His mouth curved.

Arai fell his head down from the back of Tomoyuki's head to grip his neck.

A shock went down Tomoyuki's spine, lighting a fire deep inside him.

Arai pulled Tomoyuki closer and his hand slipped down from the Japanese man's neck. It ran down the back of the nightgown, pressing against the spine

through the steps, and Tomoyuki immediately

He was shocked to hear his voice dropping down

"No. I don't want this," he gasped.

Aired stared at Tomoyuki. Eyes above a longish crawling snake the Japanese man's mouth would make this sure, for as," he managed to say.

"Don't be stupid," say.

Tomoyuki jumped as Aired knifed his

Facing Tomoyuki in the chair Aired pulled the bottom of Tomoyuki's napoleons, exposing the

A hand slipped in between his thighs. Tomoyuki squirmed his eyes shut. He couldn't. Some part of his mind still refused to accept Aired. In his body only trembled. Resistance was off as was

"How else is this possible?" Aired murmured.

"Yes," was all Tomoyuki could utter.

The pleasure that had once made his head up re-awakened made him at Aired's touch. He had a little of self-control for too long. He had begun to feel it a touch, but he knew in Aired's arms, that he had lost every

"Aired," fingers were trailing over the p of Tomoyuki's legs, making his eyes water. But still he tried to pull himself back together, and time and again he told himself it was impossible. "No," he gasped.

Aired forward in the relief. "You or neither?" said he?

He pulled Tomoyuki's legs up, lifting him

the last. He was violent with his strength, and they fell together on the marble floor.

Tomoyuki tried to push himself back up, but it was too late.

Aired pushed the Japanese man down with his weight. He pulled off his own clothes and found both of Tomoyuki's wrists with it.

Tomoyuki finally realized that someone Aired was.

"I'll never forgive you for this," he screamed.

Aired had a frown. But he was going to take what he wanted from Tomoyuki, anyway. He knew that anything he wanted was his for the taking.

What was Tomoyuki going to do?

Sleep," he yelled.

He didn't understand Aired. But maybe it was wrong to try to understand the man.

"It is humiliating to be like this?" Aired growled. Well, didn't every woman feel so sleeping with Japanese?"

His self-confidence and aggressive personality were parts of his charm. But the way Aired was using him was the very definition of a tyrant. The man gave Tomoyuki the right to reject him. He believed that Tomoyuki was his to command.

"I think you're the one who feels humiliated," Tomoyuki said. "I think it humiliates you that there is someone who won't obey you."

"Tomoyuki!" The wrinkles on Aired's forehead deepened with his displeasure. "If you think you can escape by making me angry, you should just give it

up. It won't work. I have no intention of losing you, anyway."

"Awww!"

Aoi pushed up the nightgown, exposing Tomoyuki's chest. The Japanese man struggled to escape the shame and embarrassment, but he accomplished nothing. Something cold dripped down between the cheeks of his butt and he gasped.

Aoi drew something to the floor, shoving it—one of the small bottles Tomoyuki had seen before. He had no idea the servants had prepared those for something like this.

"Ugh." He groaned, biting his lip. His wife knew he would scream.

Aoi's finger, soaked with oil, ran back and forth between Tomoyuki's cheeks. "It's just perfume oil. That means it won't hurt you. There are no variations of these oils."

"No, Aoi?"

"Don't be scared!" Aoi's tongue slipped out sticky trail over Tomoyuki's arsehole. "You'll start to like it soon. I know better than anyone how valuable you are to your own pleasure. Right?" he whispered, pressing Tomoyuki's ear.

"Ah!" A shudder shot through Tomoyuki's body. He knew it wasn't from disgust. Aoi's finger penetrated him. There was no pain, thanks to the oil. The finger pushed deep inside and began massaging his prostate. Mhm, mhm.

Although feeling spread throughout Tomoyuki's body, he couldn't help but succumb to it. Six years, he

married, but now it didn't matter how often he used up. He wasn't alone; he shared his pleasure.

"Don't think about it," Aoi continued to whisper. "Just enjoy it."

Whispered by pleasure, Tomoyuki couldn't resist. And he had to admit, that Aoi knew that better than anyone. He had been quite a cheater years ago.

He groaned. The stimulation on his prostate was numbing his back with the pleasure running deep inside him. His penis was not only erect, but rather dripped from it, pooling on the floor.

He didn't want this, but everything was beyond his control.

"Mh... Ahh," he cried softly as Aoi kissed the back of his neck.

"How does that feel?" Aoi's sweet, whispering voice came to him as if from far away. Tomoyuki shook his head slightly.

"Answer me, Tomoyuki."

Aoi took a firm hold of his member. The slight pain gave a pleasure more intense and forced a deep sigh, stopped in protest, out of Tomoyuki.

"That is what happens if you don't answer me."

Tightly gripping the base of the penis, Aoi twisted inside Tomoyuki. The Japanese man thought he had his lower under control, but it spilled out of him. He knew now he would go crazy if this went on much longer.

If it would all end up the same no matter what he did, he preferred to maintain control rather than lose it. This intention broke Tomoyuki.

"It's good," he grunted.

To be honest, he found it hard to believe how much he was missing. He was still deeply uncomfortable in Aweil's company, even after six years.

"Better than that man?" Aweil prodded.

Tomeyako didn't understand at first and assumed Aweil was asking him to guess what a question meant, or who "that man" might be.

Aweil apparently took Tomeyako's silence badly. Angry, he pulled out his finger roughly. Then pushed Tomeyako away from him. His eyes were lit up for Aweil's man. Talking. The cool, powerful, colored Tomeyako from his memory.

"Yes?"

"The man you live with. Do you love him?" Aweil grunted.

"What?" Then Tomeyako finally knew what Aweil was talking about—one of his co-workers. It had been asked of him to take the man under his wing, or he hadn't been able to refuse. The man lived for a while when they worked late, Tomeyako let him stay in his place.

Aweil had given the wrong idea about the relationship. But when had he been it out about the first place? How much did he know?

"He is—" Tomeyako started to explain but changed his mind. He didn't need to explain him to Aweil. The Aweil was a stranger to him.

Aweil's expression turned white. Ery. Tomeyako let back his answer. His face was all the more terrible as he anger because of his beauty. "I don't love

what love is you think, you will stay me."

"Are you planning to make me part of your name, huh?" Tomeyako snarled.

Aweil stared wildly at him, ignoring the provocation. "Infermously, even cannot be a human."

Even the emphasis, Aweil placed on the word "infermously." Tomeyako detected a hint of contempt for him implying that he didn't deserve to be included in such a place. The men they had shared so frequently and lovingly in the past were nothing more than weapons now.

"That's infermously," he leaned back. "That would be paradise for a man, being entirely surrounded by weapons."

They only seemed to hate each other in words. Tomeyako was only being pulled along by the swirling ink that had grown inside him.

"Paradise, huh?" For a man, that's probably true," Aweil murmured, giving him an oblique look. The first time again pressed his finger, which with oil, against the opening to Tomeyako's body. Tomeyako bit his lip and struggled not to cry out. "But any human would just be treated as someone who is enjoys the touch of a man."

"Aweil?"

That was uncharacteristic. He knew that to his head in his eyes and his made a wild attempt to escape from under Aweil.

There was no giving matter. He had been brought here to fulfill some vision of Aweil's, and now he was being threatened with banishment there. He wouldn't

stand for it. The American man never gave the slightest thought to the feelings of others.

Tomoyuki was blinded by his fury at the Japanese man's arrogance.

"Stop this," Asei administered the struggle.

"Stand up!" Tomoyuki yelled. "Why do you let me do any things like that? Why can't you just let me go."

He thrust his violently like didn't notice a pain of beating against the marble floor. His thoughts are of escape.

"Tomoyuki, Asei clicked his tongue unpleasantly as the Japanese man pulled himself up from the floor. "Hold still."

Tomoyuki was cowed by the heavy white eyes glaring at him.

Asei forced him to straighten his legs and to lean close with both arms, preventing any more of a struggle, by pressing his forehead against Tomoyuki's. He murmured once again. "Hold still."

Through the words were the same, Tomoyuki knew in the change in tone.

"Your arms are getting red," Asei said. "I know you keep struggling. There are going to be marks."

"Mark?" Tomoyuki asked.

Asei's voice was gentle, like long ago. He was the only sign of kindness he showed, but Tomoyuki's heart ached. For at least, he felt a slight relief that the last six years had never happened. He was back in the past, when he loved Asei and his

companion. Just that, he was loved in return.

"Tomoyuki."

Asei held her face and kissed him. The man's hands moved over his lips coaxingly and they parted usually. Asei licked Tomoyuki's upper lip. He drew his lower lip and he pressed their mouths tightly against.

The kisses and Tomoyuki's no real feeling and he realized, no strength remained anywhere in his body. His head flopped from side to side, frustrated at the feeling that held his hands.

Asei raised his lips from Tomoyuki's throat to his lips, as his hands slipped downwards, seeking their previous position.

"Asei," Tomoyuki moaned.

"Take that," Asei murmured. "Yes, that your body is me."

Asei and Tomoyuki instinctively pulled his body away from the position pressing down on him.

Asei's throat pulled him back, forcing him with a look and a voice. His fingers pushed open the entrance to Tomoyuki's body, which quivered welcomingly now.

"Ah, no."

Asei's excited mouthed bodies through the moment and pushed on was slowly into Tomoyuki's body. After six years, it caused some pain, but a familiar feeling. Tomoyuki had wanted so many times in the past to make love to him.

Despite all of his resistance, he only wanted to satisfy his desire.

"That's there," Asei murmured. "That's

"No." Tomoyuki whispered.

Though he said as loud as he, the red made it clear for Azechi to guess him. But he had forgotten how to be silent as further. Even hearing the pain in Azechi's voice, he said his name couldn't make him relax.

"Agh."

Azechi had managed to push halfway in. He stopped back out, sighing deeply, he stood up and went to the bed, leaving Tomoyuki on his own.

"You never did it with that man?" On some other? Azechi asked, emphasizing the between of Tomoyuki's nightgown.

The Japanese man didn't respond, but words were unnecessary. Azechi knew the answer from his body's reaction.

Azechi's expression softened and he tilted Tomoyuki's face and whispered close to his lips. "I love you, like the first time."

How small could he feel his lower mouth to be, now, but he was going to submit Tomoyuki to his own humiliation. He knew Tomoyuki's body would react to him.

Tomoyuki was disgusted by the part of him, he always shed itself to Azechi, but that only meant that he was willing to never yield his heart.

"My heart," Azechi called out to a small, drooping with honeyed indulgence. His tongue slipped over Tomoyuki's lips and Tomoyuki passively accepted all of Azechi's adoring words.



Chapter Two

When he woke up Aved was already gone. The hope that it had all just been a dream disappeared the instant Terezyka sat up on the striped bed.

The history of last night's short had been rehearsed, but the things they'd done last night lingered desperately in his mind and on his skin. No matter how carefully the evidence was cleared away afterwards, there was no way to eliminate the memories or the sensations that remained with him.

Terezyka had slept through the morning, as if he had been reluctant to reclaim his consciousness.

Why had Aved done all that? Why was he so obsessed with Terezyka? Terezyka had spent all night thinking, and wondered even less now.

All he was sure of was the results he felt it so easily transcending himself to Aved. He told himself that he had been overwhelmed by pleasure. That was, his physical pleasure would be sustained by his dangerous conviction. That would be better than what really happened.

Maybe Aved truly intended to lock him up with the women of the palace. Someday or later, the man would marry. And he might take several more wives into the women's quarters after that. As many as four wives could

be recognized as Arai's intruder. Did the man see of treasure like a property like a wife? To keep him on his side for when he wanted something different?

Tomoyuki shuddered. He was horrified at the idea of a life spent waiting for Arai's next move. It was fine for the man's women since they would live out the important duty of producing successors. If Tomoyuki would only exist as an object to sleep with.

I can't believe this is happening," he whispered.

He was wrapping his arms around his chest, beginning to shake with disgust, when he heard a knock at the door.

He groaned as he sat up. His joints creaked and a dull pain ran through his legs. His blood felt sluggish at the sight before, and a shiver deepened the numbness he already felt. He'd up to him.

The door opened and Arai appeared.

"How late have to get up," he said as he came into the room and walked straight to the bed.

Tomoyuki pressed his teeth against the pain still inside and, shaking more of his body back, slowly sat up from the bed.

"What happened last night was nothing for himself so that he could pretend it was true."

"How are you? Any pain?" Arai asked.

Tomoyuki groaned here and turned toward the window. He wouldn't meet the other man's eyes or speak to him. He wanted to show Arai that he wasn't going to just accept whatever abuse was doled out to him.

So after the worst comes to pass, Arai said dramatically. "That's fine. I have some work to do in Matsuyama today. If you need anything, tell Sans. I'll come back tonight."

Arai turned and left the room silently indifferent. It drove Tomoyuki crazy to hear the man so casually say that he would be back that night. He dug his nails into the palms of his hands.

Last night all over again, he thought. It made him rage to realize that there at least he could do. The man said he spent with Arai, the love he would be able to trust his charms. Tomoyuki knew himself well enough to realize that.

Sans was the next to come in.

"Good morning," she greeted.

Tomoyuki told himself that Sans knew nothing of what had happened the night before. This let him pretend that nothing really had happened.

"Good morning," he replied pleasantly.

"Although it's already afternoon. I guess I was really tired last night."

Sans smiled at him. "I'm glad you slept well. You look much better than you did yesterday."

He had raised feelings about her compliments, knowing what it was that had made him sleep so badly. "Thank you."

Sans pushed a cart loaded with food into the room. He wanted to be malicious and refuse the food, but he wasn't. The room was completely empty. That was only what he hadn't eaten anything since coming to this.

"Thank you for bringing it all the way here," said

"Not at all," Sana answered. "Prince Arad asked me to bring it to you. He had to go to the palace; Madam no official answer, but he plans to leave in evening."

"I see," he continued.

So Arad couldn't take him to the main palace in Madam's after all. He realized that Arad's change in the Sana's palace was motivated by the fact that she, too, didn't want anyone to know Tomyris was there, although knew that the prince had abducted someone, and a man as powerful as Arad would have some power to punish. And if her family decided to investigate the relationship between them, Arad would never be able to tell the truth.

"Would you prefer coffee or tea?" he suggested.

"Tea please," Tomyris said.

He had a barbers and hair combers and had been taught it was a little past an "well-timed" breakfast as to lunch.

"I'll have your dishes here," Sana said.

"Thank you."

Sana looked uncomfortable as she grunted. Tomyris showed her everything.

"Please don't thank me," she said. "It's my job, and her majesty asked that I treat you as a gentleman."

Andrian continued to deliver from his. This was a country where class divisions had been

internal for generations. The more Tomyris asked against him, the more uncomfortable Sana would become.

"All right," he agreed pleasantly and changed the subject. "In that case I'd like to see more of the place. Can I take a look outside after I eat?"

He presumed that she saw him as a guest of honor's. He approached the subject casually, as if he only wanted to breathe. That would be natural, for a guest, but his real intention was different—he was going to find a way to escape the palace.

The country of Madam was about as big as the largest island of Kyushu. Like the majority of Asian nations, the better part of Madam's natural wealth was generated by oil. The huge amounts of oil money that Madam took in made the country prosperous, and within three years, enriched the coffers of the royal family. The lifestyle of Madam's royalty was at a level of luxury that even the wealthiest people in Japan could begin to approach.

And the amount of money that income contributed to Madam made up a not insignificant percentage of the nation's income. Gasoline sold at the lowest prices, a good thing, always maintaining the government's level public buildings and the lowest the country could not improve.

"We're close to a city, right?" Tomyris asked. "We should be able to go living in the desert again."

"Yes," Sana answered. "It takes less than two hours to get from the city of Madam to Sana."

Lost that two hours. Tomoyuki walked as fast as he was capable of, in his mind. Two hours was only for escape should be possible. And if he was lucky, a night run into a taxi group on the way. That is, he even try to get help. If he promised to be a useful person who had gone out into the desert wilderness, would probably be all right. Although if something goes wrong, he would be a trouble.

"I can't take you to the desert myself," he continued, "but I can accompany you to the garden at your hotel. It is very beautiful. I am sure that you, I am, lovely too. My Tomoyuki."

Sara's first request that she immediately left the mode of Akari's guests. But she was not going to simply give Tomoyuki a tour—the woman had to do what he said, too.

She would probably be protected by Ay. Tomoyuki disappeared, and then passed him, but now he couldn't afford to think about anyone but escape.

"If we wander around, the security guard might be upset," he said calmly. "There are watchmen on the front and back gates, right?"

"That's correct, Sara said. But it's fine if the vehicles go through the gates. Things get a bit busy, but we should avoid if you take a taxi then."

Tomoyuki perked up a bit. "Can, come to the vehicle?" That was worth pursuing.

Sara nodded as she pointed him into a taxi.

She had no reason to be suspicious. She believed Tomoyuki was only a guest of Akari's.

which I have thought that Tomoyuki had the means to escape, anyway.

"The next one will come at 1 o'clock to deliver the food for dinner," she sternly reminded.

"Ready?" Tomoyuki murmured.

If it was delivering food for dinner, then that meant it probably came at a fixed time each day. The guest would appear at 1 o'clock. He supposed that was his chance.

"Does Akari keep cars here at the palace?" he asked.

"Yes, he does," Sara replied. "There are five vehicles Prince Akari owns and the people the guards use. But some of them may be used without his majesty's permission. A guard who was formerly employed here would use the vehicles for private purposes, and some very bad things."

"Is this I was just curious what kind of car Akari drive?" Tomoyuki said hastily to cut Sara's mood of fear. She had noticed her hand around him with a slight suspicious look. He had assumed there would be no, but Akari said they wouldn't be seen to get in.

But he had to do something while Akari was gone.

"How did Akari get in the kitchen?" he asked again.

"He always uses a helicopter," Sara revealed. He didn't often take a car anywhere. When he's visiting Sara, he goes on horseback exclusively.

"That's not horses?"

"That's correct," Sara beamed. "Prince Akari is

extremely kind of them. Arabian horses are strong and very beautiful. There's a stable in the back of the palace.

Tomozuka made up his mind to buy a horseback. He had riding experience from his boy, in England. He hadn't ridden for a while, but he did would give back to him.

When Sana left the room, Tomozuka reached to the clothes she had set out for him on a magnificent, crafted-cassia table. He pulled on smooth, loose trousers and a white shirt. It was a typical Arabian dress. Sana ordered to her feet. He saw his reflection in a mirror placed on the table and smiled nervously.

Despite the beauty of the clothes, on Sana, it looked like a costume for a school play or just a convenience. Seeing himself dressed up in Arabic clothing only underlined for him the necessity to get it back to Japan. What was not where he belonged.

Turning his eyes from the mirror, he looked toward the door. He couldn't go out into the street without a hat of some kind. He needed something to protect his head. He opened all the drawers and searched the wardrobe, but there was nothing. It was all empty.

He was forced to wear up the shoes and use them with a makeshift hat. He arrived hunched from head to shoulder with the scraps of an egyptian and Arabian style.

Hirata quickly and checked the time. 1:30. That's minutes to go. He wanted to see firsthand exactly what happened when the game were spread at 2 o'clock.

He slipped out of the door. But before he had gone very far, he spotted a guard wearing a suit and

goggles. Seeing the second at the man's hip, he returned quickly back to his room.

He knew he wouldn't be able to break the guard's afternoon thought. He concluded that he had no other option like advantage of Sana. He wanted for her to come back for the dishes, trying to fulfill his expectation.

Just as he was beginning to get restless, a knock finally came at the door. He let out a deep sigh of relief when he saw Sana come in pushing her cart.

"Oh," she woman cried out.

She must have noticed his handmade hat. She laughed, realizing that no explanation would get over this.

"I'll send this if I am going for a walk, won't I?" he said. "I looked around for one, but didn't find anything."

"If you had asked me, I could have brought you one," Sana said.

"Oh, I suppose I should have done that," he replied awkwardly. He couldn't exactly tell her that he had hoped to avoid her without anyone noticing.

"Would you like more tea?" she inquired, trying to redirect the topic.

"No, thank you. Would you mind showing me the garden now?" he asked, smothering his impatience.

Sana hesitated only a moment. Then she stopped in the middle of cleaning up the dishes and made Tomozuka's wait for privacy.

It was almost 2 o'clock.

As soon as they left the room, Tomozuka started to think he had prepared for Sana. "If possible, I don't

went to see my guards. I do not need to them. And circumstances not to say this, but they are not."

The women considered it for a moment. "It was no doubt thinking only of how to make the journey as enjoyable as possible."

"Yes, yes," she finally said, walking quickly.

Tomoyuki followed a half-step behind her, across an edge. Every time they passed one of the pillars, his heart jumped into his throat, expecting a guard to appear from behind it.

They walked through a maze of passages, progressing through the palace without seeing anyone else. He would be able to get outside nearly now, he felt. Sana stopped interrupting his thoughts.

"Who goes there?"

The question came from a uniformed guard to their right. A sword was at his hip. The guard's tall presence over Sana and himself flustered Tomoyuki.

Sana drew back, distancing herself from the guard. Customs forbade men and women to speak to each other. Suddenly Sana's attraction with Tomoyuki shrank to a fraction of her work, and perhaps, it seemed he was a foreigner.

"This is Prince Arvid's guest," she explained.

"Prince Arvid has ordered that no one be allowed outside. The guard said nothing at Tomoyuki's natural but dark eyebrows and bushy black hair.

Tomoyuki's heart began pounding again, but he collected himself. "That is all," he said. "He told me I could go wherever I wanted."

He took a step closer to the guard. He would

going to put him in my next danger.

"I've heard Sana is a magestrol only," he continued. "Could I not just stroll the air outside and gaze at the landscape?" Oh, I forgot to mention, I'm still Arvid's college friend, Matsube.

He offered his right hand. Identification was the necessary gateway to Arvid's culture. The social superior or the person with the higher status always initiated the offer. The guard was probably close to Tomoyuki's own age, and as a foreigner social position was irrelevant for Tomoyuki. But the guard would have trouble ignoring the old college friend of Arvid.

The guard showed such reluctance to return the handshake that Tomoyuki began to get nervous.

"I mean, I beg respectfully and confirm that—the guard said. "Please wait a moment."

That's not necessary. I don't want to interrupt their Arvid's work," Tomoyuki objected with a smile. The guard seemed to be persuaded to let it go. If they remained Arvid, it would be his own work that would be interrupted, not Arvid's. "If I just give up on going outside, it could just use the back garden that would be fine. I'd like to see the Arvid's horses. You would want some, if you want to keep an eye on me."

He could probably figure out the location of the garden if he didn't go outside.

After some hesitations, the guard reluctantly accepted the suggestion. Since he wasn't allowed outside, the guard would serve as a messenger of Tomoyuki's intentions.

"Sana, that man can guide me now," he said.

"You can go back to your other duties."

"All right, sir," Sami nodded with relief.

Tomoyuki smiled at her and they parted. He then followed the guard.

"I've heard Arabian horses are very beautiful," he said.

"The most beautiful in the world, and the strongest," the guard spoke enthusiastically, a Tomoyuki's praise.

"I can't wait," Tomoyuki grinned. "I wonder I haven't visited the side one of I asked. I may not like it, but I'm quite the rider." He had arranged with Aired, hoping to keep the man. If the guard like couldn't see the guard's expression, but a man seemed to be relaxing.

They stopped in front of a set of double doors and Tomoyuki changed his mouth shut.

"Please don't go outside," the guard already reminded him before opening the door.

Tomoyuki's first reaction as he passed wasn't was shock at the grandeur of the garden. The lush plot looking in the sunlight were the more to those in the first garden, but here, the garden was an intricate landscape of lush greenery. There was also a semi-circular pond where two horses stood up in their Indian dhotis. In water. Past them was a garden and several horses in a field nearby in a stable just off to the right.

Where the other garden glowed in its splendor, this one was serene. While the horses watched through a fence, he looked like a painting.

Tomoyuki also saw for the first time that the

last walls of the Sami palace were white. The trees around the decorative windows as common as the usual pillars shading the wall, were all a pale blue in the sunlight. He didn't come here to admire the scenery, however, he was surprised.

A loud crash brought him back to his senses as he asked. What had made that noise? The guard entering him, called troubled at the unusual sound.

The horses by the pond grew wild from fear. A male horse came quickly to attack them, but the horses resisted, shaking their heads and rearing up.

The guard took a step forward, then stopped and looked back at Tomoyuki. He seemed unsure of what he should do, watching his two charges for several moments. But when Tomoyuki nodded to him, he ran in the direction of the noise.

As soon as he was left alone, Tomoyuki ran out into the garden, heading toward the pond. He continued looking to the side of the horses agitated by the noise, and gradually returned to calm.

With the horses placated once more, Tomoyuki and the stable hand exchanged words.

"Thank you for your help," the man said. "Who brought?"

"Tomoyuki Takada."

As he stroked the horse's neck, Tomoyuki explained how best to explain why he was at the palace. He had told the guard he was a friend of Aired's. It was a lie, but he had only used it to compensate the guard.

"Are you by any chance Prince Aired's

breakoff" the man asked.

No there was no need to explain.

The stable hand came to shake Tetsuo's hand happily. The man had been talking about Japanese that he brought back with him. This was, for some reason, Asami had noticed a great deal to hope to everyone is very excited."

I see. Tetsuo said.

He shook hands with the man, who was young, Matsui, with small features. The word "fun" implied another memory in his mind.

I've never felt completely comfortable with anyone before. For as long as Tetsuo said.

Asami had told him that one year ago. It was the last time he had seen him. But now, he just thought it was a more polite talk. But maybe it had been that.

Asami looked different from the other people in the house. He was a pure-blooded Tetsuo had a way of knowing what that meant. Inside the royal family, which valued blood relations as highly, but it was obviously wrong.

Tetsuo just a step to his smiling thought and smiled softly. What was he thinking? It felt wrong to him. What Asami's life was like. The man was just a man for the future.

"I wonder who that man was." After all, with the man's hand, he passed in the direction the guard had gone to. It looked like there was some sort of connection.

Matsui seemed worried too, and looked to the man. "Indeed. If you don't need me, I'll

like to go out for myself.

Tetsuo said with him, holding the door. A man.

The house was not a two by a brick paved driveway, running between rows of date palms. Several guards were standing in a group. A truck parked in their midst. They didn't seem particularly tense. It looked like the driver of the truck had just been caught and confined with a long gun.

"Oh, that's the truck that brings supplies in," the stable hand said with relief. "Take the food for dinner."

Inside him, Tetsuo stood, moved by the sight of the gate just past the truck. He was sure that that was the new gate that had told him about the world inside the palace was built in at L-shaped walls past in the north and south walls and palace facing the stables. The exquisitely molded beam gate opened and closed automatically and had two guards posted at it.

The palace guards had immediately kept into action at the unexpected sound. But even they'd realized that it was only a simple accident, they stood around looking uninterestedly.

And Tetsuo was holding a horse's head in his hand.

He had only wanted to see what things looked like inside. To check the position of the gate and if it really opened at 2 o'clock. But now the perfect opportunity lay before him. He didn't think a better chance would ever come again. If he missed this one, it would be when the next would come?

He tightened his grip on the reins in his hand.

When the truck left, the gate would open if he made it. If not, he was sure to get out. His plot would have been a success if not for the guards' movements.

"Still no go back?" the stable hand asked. Tomoyuki gave a frustrated reply, and continued watching the guards' movements.

Once they started checking the vehicle for damage, the guards dispersed. The engine started up, and the gate began to slowly open. As long as the truck began to move, Tomoyuki kept onto the barrier, but escaped the room.

The guards were startled by the sudden appearance of a horse. But the gate was already open, and Tomoyuki galloped through a gate the truck.

He urged the horse at top speed. He didn't feel the connection behind him. He was entirely focused on directing the horse away from the palace. After five minutes, he turned back, but the men just were off him was already out of sight.

He was in the middle of the desert, but glimpsed the ground in all directions, the glint and glint reflecting off of it to show up during night. The desert burned all around him.

Before long, Tomoyuki was looking at a small horizon line.

He pushed on, but no matter how far he went, the desert continued without so much as the first hint of a building. Time had run a track less than two hours at night, but he began to worry that he would never actually find it.

When he reached Medina, he could go to the

palace and say that he had lost his passport and they would probably be able to help him. But if he never reached the city, that didn't really matter. His hope of escaping was a long group gone from as well. He was waiting for someone. He was haunted by the idea that he was going in the wrong direction.

"I guess I should have brought some water," he muttered to himself.

Especially if he was going to get lost like this. A terrifying idea came up at his mind, but he quickly shook it off.

It was strange that he had gotten lost. Two hours was only the distance between the house and Medina. Even if he was lost, he would be there. He knew perfectly well that it was impossible to compare the desert to Tokyo, but without some assistance, he would only end in pain.

Arthur horses were reputed to be strong, and the horse lived up to its heritage, kicking up the sand feverishly. Tomoyuki pulled his spine, telling himself that the hardest part was getting out of the palace, and he'd done that.

But as more time passed, that hope, too, evaporated. The sun blazed directly overhead, melting him. A river of sweat poured down his back. His legs were numb with shock and his hands, resting on the reins, lost all their strength.

He began to lose hope. What if he died, lost out there like this? His mind, weakened by the heat, offered him nothing but bleak possibilities.

What would anyone think of Tomoyuki's

disappearance? Maybe he would search for him. Yes, he had run out alone into the desert.

"Alone?"

Saying the name only made Tomoyuki feel more hopeless. He knew it was selfish to rely on Akemi - he had run away from her, but he couldn't help it.

He struggled to shake off those useless thoughts. His head swung up back and forth on the horse's neck.

That was when he saw it. In the corner of his eye, he caught sight of a tent, sandy dunes ahead, and the desert. A grip was coming towards him from the desert.

Tomoyuki shouted and urged the horse.

The jeep stopped. As he climbed off the horse and got up beside the jeep, the window lowered. A man, wearing a green checked kachipochi and a dark kumogata.

"Thank you," he croaked.

"What happened?" the driver asked.

The man in the passenger seat had a magnificent beard that trailed down to his chest. It was hard to tell his age, but many deep wrinkles ran across his forehead.

Three men were clearly not tourists.

"I came out to capture, but I got lost. I'm really lost."

"Alone? Without any supplies?" The man said. At last an answer.

No, he answered. "I underestimated the desert. I guess I just thought there would be lots of water nearby."

The bearded man whispered something to the driver. They led a thick screen and he couldn't understand what it was said.

But the bearded man said exactly what Tomoyuki had hoped he would. "We'll take you to the jeep first."

"Do you have any water?" he inquired before going inside the vehicle.

The driver was so dry it was going hard to even standing, and he coughed a few times.

"Oh, I'm sorry. We weren't thinking."

The bearded man handed him a plastic bottle of water. Tomoyuki took it with shaking hands and gulped it down eagerly. Cool water had never tasted so delicious since he was a child.

"Hop in," the driver said.

"Right," Tomoyuki replied. But he suddenly realised that he hadn't thought about what would happen if he froze. He couldn't just abandon it in the middle of the desert.

"That's a nice horse," the bearded man said. "Thank you for the horse back."

"Thank you," Tomoyuki replied.

The man named Darud got out of the driver's seat. Tomoyuki was nearly defenceless with gratitude that he was willing to take the horse back to town.

The man Darud wasn't someone who had many friends, or no friends at all, but this man was only one of his best friends.

"Thank you so much," Tomoyuki gave the horse back. He was relieved that he would still see his

The bearded man moved to the driver's window. Tomoyuki took the passenger's side. He knew this man was dangerous. He wasn't sure if he could completely trust these men, but he decided that it was much more dangerous to be wandering around in the desert. It was a necessary risk.

The bearded man was named Kaden.

The jeep slowly began moving. Down, following down behind them. The horse-drawn carriage of his past, despite having run so far already.

"You saved my life. I was afraid that if I didn't say my last to you, my tour group would lose all sense of priorities," Tomoyuki said, blaring them to warn people who would notice if something happened to him.

Kaden nodded. "Where are you from?"

The jeep shook with satisfying force.

Japan," Tomoyuki replied softly, his head rigid in an effort to keep them sitting over

"Japan?" Kaden exclaimed. "You're not from here?"

Polishing by his cold manner and speaking softly, Kaden was about as old as Tomoyuki's parents. He knew how much the usage of a desert dweller.

"Yes," Tomoyuki said softly.

"It must be a nice country," Kaden remarked. I met another Japanese fellow a long time ago and it was nice, too."

The man looked seriously, but he said Japanese. You couldn't call these conversations truly, but the man never seemed unpleasant.

"Where did you learn Arabic?" Kaden asked.

You speak it well.

Tomoyuki was of a line no more to answer the question. He had learned Arabic from Kaden. It was Kaden's native language, so at one time, Tomoyuki had studied it with great interest.

"I taught myself," he said.

"That's amazing," Kaden narrowed his eyes and asked his bearded man. His reaction told Tomoyuki that he had not answered correctly. Kaden was an expert and so, even if present, one should always reply truthfully.

Through the clouds of sand, Tomoyuki glimpsed a village. It was not Madaba. He saw a remote place of the desert.

You don't mind if we make a little side trip, do you? We have some pressing business here," Kaden said, keeping his eyes straight ahead.

Tomoyuki couldn't protest. He was the one who had suddenly interrupted Kaden and Darnell's trip. "It's fine as long as I get back to the hotel where there's still light on."

Kaden nodded with a smile and drove the jeep through the village.

He traveled through a labyrinth of alleysways, surrounded on all sides by stone buildings. The houses were built, defended by wooden doors, and few people were to be seen. On the porch of one house, a circle of two men smoked a water pipe, smoking. They raised their heads to the jeep as it passed and Kaden returned their greeting.

The smell of food mixed with the stink of a ship was not like an inside the grip through its open windows.

After they had left the houses behind, the ship opened up. Dozens of boats went out up on a bay that appeared to be a market. This place was not a work area, women and children.

Tomoyuki was truly taken aback. Modern cities, countries made rich by oil production. It was far different from capital city, as streets lined with luxury hotels and restaurants, famous restaurants as a more modern city. It was one of the leading tourist destinations in the world. He knew only the gloomy images of the country. But this time, he was seeing a totally different side of it. It was not about an oil. It was about a modern country.

The ship turned away from the ship.

Tomoyuki suddenly realized that he could no longer see Daisuke behind them. He started to walk about around a house.

"Yes," he was just about to ask Kaden about where the ship stopped.

They were outside the biggest building. It was not so big.

This must be the only district with apartment buildings. The rows of tiny windows and houses of a three-story building. There were many houses of a three-story building. The light of lamps reflected from the windows. Tomoyuki thought it looked extremely dark.

Going out of the driver's seat, Kaden turned around to open the passenger door. Tomoyuki got out of the car, still moving up at the business.

"It was here," he said.

"I'd like to interfere with your work."

He had heard, he said. I want to go inside with a computer-looking building, but of course he couldn't say that. If he did something to spend Kaden, and by some small chance, he was refused to take him further, it would be the same as to Kaden.

Kaden had his hand on Tomoyuki's back. "You won't interfere. Come with me. We'll have some information."

Tomoyuki felt a child run down his spine, but he didn't refuse.

"Well, just one step," he acquiesced, smiling slightly toward the entrance.

But he knew wrong to go in the end. Shouldn't he tell them to take him back as soon as possible? He was getting away.

"It's quite late, the other four members are going to go on a lot of unnecessary trouble down the road. I'd like to at least tell them I'm alright," he said as they went in.

He didn't really want to call anybody. It was just a little game that was going on that there were other people taking his time.

Kaden shrugged his shoulders and shook his head. "I'm sorry, but the phone here isn't connected."

"Oh, I see." Tomoyuki's voice sounded dark. There were no doors or any beam over the window. They were so they simply passed inside. Oil lamps came from the ceiling. It was a very simple place. Tomoyuki looked at Kaden's face, apparently.

Tomoyuki walked with Kaden down a hallway.

illuminated stone pathway. Their footsteps echoed off the walls of the building, as they went each step a few feet off her into Tsumeyaku. They weren't his quarters, it

An unusual interestment went through Tsumeyaku of having someone. His eyes widened in surroundings surely when he heard the first one of humans from somewhere in the shadows. The air was dry, but he felt a breeze—clinging to his skin.

He turned around with a start. A human figure in a black Andean dress had appeared out of the darkness following closely behind Tsumeyaku without so much as the sound of a footfall.

He couldn't even guess at her age, for everything except her eyes was covered up. His eyes felt like they were cooling, showing no emotion.

Kaden stopped ahead of him and Tsumeyaku nearly tripped into him, his attention still focused on the woman behind them. He peered in a step or so.

Kaden was standing in front of a wooden door. Passing Tsumeyaku, the woman threw up her hands. Kaden and whispered something to her ear. Kaden nodded and she opened the door.

"After you," Kaden waved Tsumeyaku inside first, then followed him in. Being the guest of honor.

The woman lowered her eyes at Kaden's side and silently shut the door.

"This is Tsumeyaku's room, tucked off to the side, what looked like a private room.

The furniture was all extremely simple, despite the beauty of the building. A table or work table had been set up on a carpet spread over the floor, and a

the tapestry covered the walls. Unusual dishes and clay pots decorated the walls. Tsumeyaku went on further back in the room.

A man appeared from the next room.

"You're late, Kaden," he said.

He sat down unconsciously on a sofa, lighting a pipe. His eyes landed over Tsumeyaku's body as if calculating his price.

"I'm glad you're here," Kaden approached the sofa where the man sat. "I made sure we weren't followed."

The man smiled vaguely as he chewed the pipe. "Why? My friends are big guys."

While Kaden and the man talked together, Tsumeyaku studied them silently. The man wore a thin, light-colored robe. He had dark brown skin and a sharp face. His features were perfect, tapered back the way a sword does, almost of a well-known man. One face was drawn up to his chest, but he still seemed himself very.

"So, what's a guest," he man continued. "Or are we going to see him in another another guest? As he is I can tell, like Kaden like woman."

Kaden turned back to look over his shoulder at Tsumeyaku and whispered. "What of it? These things happen all the time in Ziyad. We just can't let word get out."

"True." The man chewed his pipe and narrowed his eyes.

Feeling an ugly heat in the atmosphere, Tsumeyaku turned away.

"What did you tell him to get him to come?" said Kadomoto.

"He's a Japanese man who got lost," said Zeller. Kadomoto nodded.

"Hold on a minute! That's a pretty interesting anecdote!" The man spoke with surprise, but he didn't really look at all that interested.

Came now Zeller, as you know him, to this. Kadomoto explained: "Once I got lost in one of the bars. I'll be dead in the world. He can't read me. He's a friend, he's a friend."

Tsukiyama went pale. "My brother," Kadomoto said. "He was a brother under Kadomoto's name. No wonder I had such a strange feeling."

Tsukiyama's nervousness had certainly been well-founded. Kadomoto was obviously nothing like the helpful old man he had acted like in the desert. I did not look at Tsukiyama with the cold-blooded eyes of a man. I shall run down the Japanese man's story to him as if he might possibly be a person. But it was still on with their conversation, about men more central topics.

"I'm sure we could find any number of boys for treatment as good-looking as him. And there are still with interests in that direction who have a particular fancy for Asians." Kadomoto's mouth twisted into an odd shape as he spoke those horrifying words.

The man called Zeller leaned forward and let his upper teeth in an odd way, then stood up. Two words remained now to say, but Kadomoto said his own to end it. could

Zeller took hold of Tsukiyama's arm, taking his arm. "You can definitely charge a high price for this one. You don't already belong to someone, do you?"

The two men were both young and effeminate with voices. Tsukiyama shook off Zeller's hand.

"I don't understand the question," he said. I again. I also glared at the man with as much distance as I could muster. Hiding such a low determination was the only thing he could do to avoid being consumed by his past.

He had been as far as on escaping the palace and knew that he had lost sight of anything else. In a foreign country, a single wrong decision can lead to unimaginable results, and he hadn't considered the implications of his actions.

"Involved Tsukiyama?" Kadomoto asked. "How does the man look like Zeller's hand? Why don't you just have a look at it?" He might understand his position a bit better then.

Tsukiyama couldn't believe what he was hearing. Analyzed by shock, he found it impossible to resist. He wanted to get out of there right now. But he couldn't imagine escaping the opportunities he escape through his actions. He felt, if he would really and believed that

He had to make down. If he was going, he would have to think of something. He desperately needed to know that it didn't matter how much he regretted his actions. He had no choice but to get through this

"Good idea," Zeller agreed.

He reached out once more with the hand the Japanese men had shaken off. Totsuyuki had put up himself to stay calm, but he shoved Zefir away with a flailing. Zefir staggered back and Kadon threw his fury.

"Who do you think you are?" Kadon's face was scarlet as he roared Totsuyuki's name. "I give you word I behave unless we hurt you."

Kadon twisted Totsuyuki's arms behind his back and he battled with pain. The strain was surprisingly strong for such a small man, not changed as the loss to the Japanese man's resistance.

Totsuyuki's joints were stretched until he felt pain coursing through him as Kadon's fingers dug at his arms. He groaned.

"Don't struggle or I'll cut your arm off right here," Kadon threatened.

At that moment, the woman they had met at the courtyard appeared out of nowhere and disappeared without a sound. She knelted before Totsuyuki and efficiently held his hands out of the way. In another moment, the pain he was bound in went up and he awoke.

"No! Don't!" Totsuyuki yelled.

He flinched around, but Kadon held him firmly and pushed him roughly to his knees. He sat but his arms were going to snap.

The woman put her hand to Totsuyuki's forehead.

"No! Get away from me!" he screamed. "It's obviously pointless to struggle. Not at

last Zefir lent a look at you." A desperate smile crept over Kadon's face as he pointed close behind Totsuyuki.

Zefir himself stopped Kadon. "That's enough Kadon-kun."

The man didn't look particularly offended, on the contrary, he seemed to be enjoying himself. His lips curled into a crooked smile and he shook his head with a theatrical gesture.

"Aren't you enjoying me," he said, "but unfortunately, I have no interest in sleeping with a man."

Totsuyuki was shocked at the sudden mention of Aseel's name. How had Zefir known? Kadon seemed silent, stopped judging back, his eyes wide.

"Aren't you?" he whispered, his grip-tightening very noticeably.

Kadon then moving his hand away, Totsuyuki landed in struggle but suddenly shaking from the shock he had come up close to experiencing.

Zefir returned to his old place on the sofa as if nothing at all had happened. He sat down again, and this time up, and picked up his cup. "That, or he is a bit," he added.

"Who else do you mean?" Kadon muttered, coming closer to Zefir and leaning towards him.

"Look at the way he's wearing," Zefir pointed out. "No one but the royal family has silk as fine as that fitted him. I suspect we'll find the Marital coat of arms embroidered in the lining. Aseel must have invited me to the Imperial palace."

Tomoyuki couldn't judge the quality of it, all he was wearing. Neither could Kaiden, probably. He hadn't checked the coat, but Kaiden was a young man and Tomoyuki could see most gathering on the main corridor.

"Why didn't you tell me? If only I'd known," Kaiden yelled.

The coat wasn't really Zaku's in the least. It must be an familiar item with Aired, never he had used it before, but Tomoyuki couldn't imagine, the business, the royal family might have it a dignified place like this.

"We'll send him back at once," Kaiden said. "Please give a good word for me, no?"

Zaku responded to Kaiden's plea, by puffing seriously on his cigar. "That's the last in the house. We will fight as well as we can the long way. You will see how much influence my good word will have."

"Well," Kaiden protested.

Tomoyuki's mind was on them as he left to go this exchange. It was Aired's fault that he was in the situation in the first place, and now Aired would be in salvation. It was ironic. But he was still incapable to do that Zaku had been here.

Anyway, it seems it's a new late. Zaku said, looking up.

Tomoyuki, Kaiden, and the black robe man all followed him gaze and listened.

They heard a first voice. It gave them a moment as it became a man. Tomoyuki thought of the boy—the name of angels. At last the voice had

and in a place they heard nothing all around them. It was impossible to say how much was passed the moment. But they heard the sound of footsteps as usual.

The door burst open, revealing Aired, his white hair flowing around him. Tomoyuki was the first thing he fixed his eyes on as he strode into the room. His great expression softened for only a moment, but his eyebrows knitted together once again. His expression was dead.

Tomoyuki stayed on his feet, unable to make the slightest move. He couldn't pull himself together, but it wasn't that just that. Joy, sorrow, embarrassment, and many other emotions flooded his heart.

"Zaku," Aired called out in a low voice.

He was dressed in a pure white kellyn and black. Tomoyuki was awed by his majesty and stared at him, transfixed, forgetting all else.

"Did we who's been going on here," Aired inquired.

He was a decent man. A nervous camp. Filled the room with a great, roared in his glowing, honey-colored hair.

"Oh, we ran by chance," Kaiden answered. "I thought he'd been coming earlier, but I suppose it's time to think him home."

"I'm not talking to you," Aired snapped, and made the explanation.

Kaiden paled and held his tongue.

"Zaku."

The second time Aired said his name. Zaku

unhappily rubbed out his eyes. "Awed, please don't blame Kakeru," he finally said. "I'm sure he does imagine that a good day would be working around here at the clinic."

A small smile on Awed's temple revealed Tetsuya didn't know which of Kakeru's words Tetsuya was reacting to, but it was clear that he was infuriated.

"Tetsuya, look! Kakeru's rather adorable, isn't he?" Awed said.

"That's perfectly understandable," Kakeru said. "But would you consider forgiving it this time, just consideration for me? Even I won't want that to be a point at the palace in Sado."

Kakeru's theatrical tone was no doubt deliberate. Tetsuya thought he detected a hint of happiness in the man's voice as well—forced all that in exchange for my silence.

The brand of Awed's anger was renewed at Tetsuya's but the man didn't back at him. He was obviously more upset at Tetsuya than anyone else, but using sarcasm and acting caught in such a desperate plan.

"Come, I swear that we've done nothing wrong," Kakeru asked. "Ask him yourself!"

Come? Tetsuya remembered now. Awed's brother. Awed's younger cousin, and the next in line for the throne.

"Trouble will catch up with you as it must if you keep afflicting yourself with a dangerous plan like this," Awed shot back cold.

Kakeru gave a small smirk. "I'll have your silence



in mind, counter. We can all agree that the Zepherus is a remarkable job, within Makoto's borders, but taking from it... isn't that right, Kachin?"

Kachin looked only more distraught that Jala was asking him to back that up.

Jala's eyes turned to Tomoyuki. "In my good, I just ran into my trouble. And I'm in contact. I might be able to help you."

Azumi did not respond. He didn't agree. Tomoyuki refused to respond, either. He grabbed the Japanese man by the arm and pulled him roughly out of the room.

At once as they were outside the building, Azumi's hand slipped away. He made almost up to them and Tomoyuki had to jog to catch up. This was the right time to thank Azumi for saving him.

Azumi's guards were waiting for him on foot at the landing.

They came out into the square, which the helicopter used. Azumi got in, but Tomoyuki is still for a moment. Azumi shot him a look and he looked it, compelled. The guards then got into the door with him.

The helicopter rose into the air.

Azumi spun the rotor blades to start, then forward. Tomoyuki had started his descent, to report his gratitude, and in the end they returned to the hotel palace without saying a word to each other.

Sata ran up to him when they reached the palace. "Mr. Tomoyuki! I'm so glad you're safe!"

Tomoyuki repeated what he'd done to Sata.

She had been so worried about him that she was crying.

"Sata..." He wanted to tell her that he was safe, but she wouldn't let him.

"It must have been terrible when your house was spoiled by the noise of the accident," she hissed.

"Yes!" He started at Sata, but her shoulders shook as if she was frightened. He knew perfectly well that the house hadn't been spoiled, but that seemed to be the way the servants had decided to stick to.

"Sata, you may go. Thank you," Azumi said gently.

Tomoyuki expected Azumi to be angry, but instead was exactly the same as always. He could tell her much. Azumi stated Sata, though he had hardly noticed them together.

When Sata left, Tomoyuki was left alone with Azumi. The moment the door closed, an oppressive feeling descended over the room.

"What a ridiculous thing to do!" Azumi began yelling. The corners of his eyes pulled themselves up and his mouth set across his brow. He could not shake his fingers any longer. "What were you thinking, running off like the desert of alone? What do you think would have happened if Sata hadn't been there?"

Tomoyuki drew his lips tight. Even if his own actions weren't had put him in danger, he wasn't about to let Azumi criticize him for it. "What fault was it that I had to do such a thing, anyway?"

"Tomoyuki, please stop worrying for yourself!"

Tomoyuki started his eyes and moved away.

amazed at being waited by him.

"You're . . . Arai!" he cried off and didn't do anything more. He was probably going to cry. A Torayuki again, but apparently thought better of it. He rubbed his forehead, looking tired and gave a long sigh. "When you disappeared into the desert, I tried to be that place I mentioned. If you were there, you wouldn't be more danger than anywhere else. And if you were here had passed, things would have been different. I thought my first move was to search. I spent a lot of time, I would never have been able to find you down again. This is the kind of place I tried to . . ."

Torayuki realized now just how lonely he had been. If Zahir hadn't been there, or if Arai had been the hero, he would be somewhere very distant right now. The Japanese concept of the world such impossible to imagine how large the great world he was using suddenly even more.

"I'm sorry," he murmured.

Arai took his hand from his head and looked at Torayuki. But the Japanese man still didn't feel his smiling eyes continued and kept his eyes lowered.

"There was no time when the battle was over happened," Arai continued. "We heard the commotion and ran out to see what was happening. We got the story from the stable hand. Although, the good news was to report to me didn't mention that the horse was spoken."

Torayuki had really done a horrible thing. He blamed himself without hesitation.

"Torayuki."

Arai opened his arms wide. Before Torayuki refused to get away, he was regarded as an entrance to some of his home crack.

"Arai!" he squeaked.

"Don't you worry," Arai whispered fiercely. "If you're there again, I don't know what I'll do."

His words were overpowering, but Torayuki was gradually aware of how much worry he had caused Arai. Torayuki colored. Arai's need to hold him tight as best as he could, because he had no idea of staying the man.

It was blindingly obvious that if he submitted to him now, there was no telling what would happen. Being in Madras and doing as Arai wished was the same as giving himself his own life. He would have to think many things like his peaceful life and all the work he did put into his career.

But he didn't really care about those things. He was he wasn't a student was being asked to abandon his life. If he ever did that, sooner or later he would be free.

"I just want to go back to Japan," he whispered.

"That again?" Arai pushed him roughly away.

Torayuki looked straight at him. "I'll say it as many times as I need to. I have to go back. I don't want to stay here. It doesn't matter what you think, because I'm going back to Japan."

He couldn't stay in Madras. He had to leave.

"And that again?" You'll let yourself be forced to stay here?" Arai asked obviously not interested in

"assuming, I suppose any further."

Tomyeiko left a minute to reply. "That might be better than being in the palace."

One corner of Arow's mouth drew up into a faint radiation.

Tomyeiko knew it was ridiculous. But that was no way he could give us his indignation. He would as likely let his complexion, but he didn't feel up to it.

Arow glared at Tomyeiko severely but she suddenly grabbed him up in both arms. Stunned by the sudden movement Tomyeiko was nearly thrown to the bed. He made a move to escape immediately, but Arow's body pressed down on him before he could.

"What are you doing?" he asked sternly. It's

"I'm just checking to make sure they didn't do anything to you," Arow said.

"Are you kidding?" Tomyeiko was and showed it in a snarl-begging response.

"No, I'm not," Arow whispered harshly to Tomyeiko's ear.

Spurred out on the floor, the Japanese man murmured a strenuous protest, but he was so weakly disadvantageous because that he accomplished nothing.

"They—they didn't do anything?" he said. "I came before they could."

Arow would not accept the explanation. He would say nothing.

He held the Japanese man down and asked if the sword that was off his back and under his

Tomyeiko glared at the floor, rocked up

glaring much stronger than stone. It was as if the other man couldn't believe that there existed a person who would not easily find him.

"Arow—Tomyeiko felt hungry eyes on him and his lips trembled. "That's enough. You've seen what you've done," he begged.

"I'm not just doing this to you," he wanted to say.

His ground his teeth together, but the only thing keeping him to check was the fact that Arow was watching him. He never wanted to reveal his weakness to the other man. If he showed even once he would do it again and again. And if he ever stopped thinking about what he was doing, he would begin to obey Arow.

Arow seemed to have sensed the Japanese man's other reaction.

"Not yet," he said in a cold voice, among Tomyeiko's lips up high. There was no chance to fight back.

"Stop that!" Tomyeiko protested.

"You're already closed up tight again. Stop everything I did to you last night," Arow said. "How often, you're that shy?"

"Arow!"

"Did you still not," Arow said suddenly.

Tomyeiko's cheeks flushed from the level of his eyes down on him. Arow was close enough now. Tomyeiko would find that breath. How much did she need to demand him before he'd be satisfied?

"Did you in your mind made," Arow added.

"Right!" Tomyeiko gasped.

Azazel's fingers brushed across his body, and Tomoyuki's mind flashed back to last night. Long hair! Long hair! Long hair! When he'd said they would do this was the first time. He had lost so much that Tomoyuki had wished he would be stronger.

"Not this..." Tomoyuki whispered.

He wanted how much you struggle, you, and only me, Azazel himself said. "I thought I taught you the last night. In my prison, you have no choice but to fight me."

"Azazel—ah..."

Azazel was stroking the strands of Tomoyuki's body. He seemed to be on the verge of entering himself. Tomoyuki's body stiffened with anticipation.

"You'll stay relaxing me soon enough. And not voluntarily." "I'll help you remember, as time goes by. Forgetful. What was it you were begging me to do last night when you clung to me?"

Tomoyuki couldn't believe how easily Azazel could say these things. How unknown could he be?

The moment of Azazel as a kind man was remaining stored in him. He had always thought Azazel to be confident and arrogant, but the man he knew now would have forced someone else to submit to him. But Azazel was nothing but an arrogant tyrant now.

"Do you think... you can actually get inside?" Tomoyuki said, deliberately making use of a formal tone. He had to get a step in front. He realized that there was a part of him that wanted to be overwhelmed, but that how arrogant the man was, Tomoyuki still loved him around this. He had been forced to face that fact, and still

wanted Azazel warm into his breast.

If I ever back for you. Or I want you to wait for me. There might get by that my feelings won't change.

Now it was Tomoyuki's turn to dwell on the prison Azazel had made six years ago. He'd accused Azazel of lying, and had been forced to pretend that he'd forgotten about their promise in order to protect himself. Therefore he kept reacting now was because he could no longer imagine when he would be like if he allowed himself to be swept away.

Part of him was happy that Azazel was no longer with him. On the other hand, Azazel's feelings might melt down. Or he might get tired of him. Or his mind, sustained by their separation, would become plain.

Tomoyuki shuddered. He preferred death to living like this.

"I wonder..." Azazel's voice was so soft. "I might be wanted if we sleep together. At least, until we get tired of each other."

All these words, something stretched then made Tomoyuki and snapped apart.

He had done his best to protect his mind, but his regard, sincerity was no match for Azazel's words. Therefore would harm him for as long as he desired him, the just desire of him when he got bored. Tomoyuki would be able to do nothing but pray that Azazel love himself quickly.

He was different from Azazel. The longer they were together, the deeper his wounds would become.

"Why couldn't she just have just left him alone? After six years, he had finally felt like he was too young. Now, in spite of his age, he'd been dragged back into some suffering that he'd experienced him before."

"Given me a loss, Tomoyuki?" Arai asked, looking down at him.

Tomoyuki saw himself reflected in Arai's honey-colored eyes, threatening to swallow him whole. But he seemed as he looking at himself from somewhere far away.

He lifted his head from the bed and gave Arai a light kiss. Arai lost no time in holding his hand and forcing the kiss to become deeper.

Tomoyuki's thoughts responded. How can it would be to turn himself over to Arai and let another person's kiss.

He was dispossessed by the part of himself "swim" away in the corner of his mind, that wanted him.

He heard someone calling his name, and he pulled open his heavy eyelids.

Moonlight streamed into the room. Arai sat lifting Tomoyuki in his arms.

"We're leaving," Arai said. "Get up, and."

Tomoyuki looked at the clock on the nightstand and saw that it was nearly one in the morning. What would they possibly be going this late at night?

He didn't ask. He didn't care. Tomorrow wouldn't get him anywhere. In the end, he would have to sleep Arai's colors.

When he got out of bed, Arai—in a great way—helped him change. He took off his nightgown, a dark red, once Arai had finished dressing him in the clothes he'd prepared, Tomoyuki understood. It was always women's clothing.

"Why do I have to wear this?" he demanded, pouting. Even if he had lost the will to fight back, was there still some things he wouldn't accept. "I don't want to."

He started to take off the shirt, but Arai might hold of his hand. Arai's face was gone. "We don't have time for questions. If you're opposed to it, I'll have to ask other people for help."

Arai was threatening to have other people step. Tomoyuki asked if he didn't believe. He had no choice in the matter.

When they returned, he clamped his mouth shut. If Arai was just going to spend everything he had, there was no point in arguing. He obeyed in silence.

Once they'd covered his head with a light, fluffy something, but his eyes, Arai hurried out of the room with him. A prep was waiting for them in the hallway. He was hurried into the back seat and, so he did his place. The prep began to pull quietly away. He gave a nervous glance at the spy from a distance in the garden, glancing in the light of the headlights as he disappeared through the main gate.

The parking space opened in another. The guards were in the position of respect to the prep carrying him. And Tomoyuki. Nothing more impeded the prep's

drove through the midnight snow.

"I'm sure there are things you want to ask, Asoei said once they went out of the palace. "Don't let the driver bother you. He'll never speak about his family, not of home," he added, offering Tomoyuki the keys to question him without so much as a glance in his direction.

There was a story in Asoei's "men paper and a" meaning "there is nothing to choose." Oh, in that case in Japan, "there is no choice." All of the people employed in Asoei's palace, including the driver, had taken the same oath to him.

Of course there were things Tomoyuki wanted to ask about, like where were they going? And why? But he remained silent. Even if he knew those things, it wouldn't be useful to do anything about any of it.

"We're going to Matsuo," Asoei said to the driver.

To Matsuo.

The unexpected answer only added more questions. Didn't Asoei take Tomoyuki to his point in Kyoto so that he (he) would find out about him? Then would Asoei explain things if his family and order found out about Tomoyuki once they'd reached Matsuo? On the off chance that Tomoyuki's absence was kept public, Asoei would no longer be able to deal with it privately.

He had no idea what Asoei was thinking.

"There's no need to worry," Asoei seemed to read Tomoyuki's reactions without even looking at him. He was still looking straight ahead, smiling.

always been a worry. As soon as you sit on the floor inside your room, you think of nothing but how other people are going to react."

Tomoyuki gulped at the way Asoei was smiling, and at his tender expression. He didn't want to talk about the past. It was over. He wanted to put that away, but he couldn't.

Asoei's eyes narrowed suddenly and Tomoyuki wondered what he was thinking about. After doing so about him and bring him to him, the man had been trying to break him with his arrogance. But the Asoei that Tomoyuki saw now was just like the one from six years before.

Do you remember that night we had?" Asoei asked suddenly.

Of course Tomoyuki remembered it. It was whenever all the other Japanese students had invited him to a special dining night he couldn't refuse. It would have been strange if he had. Asoei had laughed and told him he was thinking about it too much and that he didn't need to pretend that he was thought. But Tomoyuki recognized that a homosexual relationship was uncharted. To him, the moment of passion was too much.

He didn't want his relationship with Asoei to end. He was willing to pretend that they were just close friends in order to protect it. But Tomoyuki had always imagined that some day he would have to go on a trip with a girl from school. That if it had to be done, he would do it.

But I can't figure out what it is you want.

And when Asoei got angry at him, he had said

that that, too, was unavoidable.

Azumi had walked in a fight, but it was, Taniguchi had just been shocked at how easily Azumi had treated him.

In the end, he'd accepted the date. He'd told her just that there was someone else he liked, and he'd told her that she'd thought that he had a one-sided interest in her. They were both released.

"I don't really remember that date," Taniguchi said, contradicting the words of someone that had come up in his mind.

The smile disappeared from Azumi's face. "You're afraid that I thought you have no feelings for me?" he said.

The shadows cast by the moonlight said something to Azumi's face. Taniguchi thought he now regret having Azumi's expression and, confused, he looked away. He examined his hands to keep his mind occupied with their texture. "You mean choose for me? Or do you mean in Shinjuku?"

Azumi quietly answered that he meant both.

"If you know I'm angry, then why are you doing this?" Taniguchi said. "That's not exactly fair, is it?"

He had thought he would never see Azumi again after six years of no word from him. Finding himself, he had told himself that it had just been a lie. When Azumi told him he would be back for him, part of the relief of putting down.

This man was the hero in Shinjuku's district and he was believed in someone. Taniguchi was sure that he had purposefully withheld details about himself when he

was an exchange student so that he could enjoy himself doing his best sort of freedom.

But what would Taniguchi do? If the man he loved was just for him, all he could do was give him up. He had wanted the part of himself that wanted to believe that Azumi would come back, and he had to agree again to disagree with the naive belief that he should give up.

But despite all of his efforts, the moment Taniguchi saw Azumi again it had all been for naught. He had asked so much even when he had looked Azumi away in the past. His old scars had festered and spread again, his wounds weeping.

"If I'd asked you outright to come to Shinjuku with me, would you have?" Azumi asked softly.

How can I answer that? Taniguchi asked back.

He tried to imagine what he would have done. It probably wouldn't have been compared by a simple "No" from Azumi, whom he hadn't seen in so long. And if that nostalgic feeling wouldn't have overwhelmed him, he'd know he would have rejected the idea.

Apparently he still hadn't fully dealt with the past.

"You wouldn't have come, would you?" Azumi asked. "I know you were holding yourself together. I think you would be fine without me."

Taniguchi remembered his response, wondering if he had really said that. He had. He had said that small, stupid, and how forced to someone else. But there was no one to blame but him.

His emotions flared, but Taniguchi pushed

"Don't look so far back on me. If you know all this, why did you do that? What do you want from me?" They talked on to dawn here, and now you're fleeing me to sleep like a woman. To fulfill your promise you made. Don't be ashamed. You of all people must realize this is justice. You must." He hesitated to give voice to the most crucial of his arguments and sat himself off. He hid his cheek but kept his head at that point of himself and instead, pushed his foot. "You're getting married, aren't you?"

He was relieved his voice hadn't shaken when he'd said that.

"Getting married." Aired tilted his head and looked at him for the first time since getting on the air. Their eyes locked. Aired's honey-colored eyes met Mark now reflecting the darkness.

Without any change in his expression he confirmed Tokayuki's suspicion: "I suppose I have. I've been engaged for six years. My father wants me married while he's still alive, and eventually I'm marrying him."

Tokayuki's heart squeezed tight.

He had been trying to bring himself to accept that Aired was engaged, but it distressed him to hear it straight from the man himself. And the calm manner only made Tokayuki hate him more.

And this brought him back to his original question. If Aired was getting married, why had he come for Tokayuki?

"I see," he said coldly. "I suppose congratulations are still a little premature."

"What could he do but laugh and let it go?" He

couldn't be expected to have his feelings under rational control. He had only just been given the information for the first time, because every time he glimpsed Aired's face, the six years that had accumulated between them crashed over him.

"I suppose I thought you wouldn't want to come. Madam," Aired said no longer looking at him.

"You're right. He agreed. "I didn't want to."

"So you didn't want to be with me because you jumped on my back?" Aired said.

What an incredible thing to say. Tokayuki was his student, which were on the verge of marriage. He wouldn't let Aired know he'd lost him. If he admitted that, it would just make him look weakly in politics.

"That doesn't matter anymore. As long as you can go back to Japan," he said, acting somewhat.

"It doesn't matter." Aired repeated coldly.

"Of course it doesn't," Tokayuki insisted. "I know my own life is long. But I have a job, you know how long do you want to keep me here?"

"So you hate Madam, too?" Aired said.

A trial would come over his face. It revealed a Tokayuki's mind the memory of Aired's arrogant expression when he had forced himself on him.

"You don't need to worry about your job," he said, softened. "We told them that the negotiations were dragging on, so you had to stay a while longer."

"That's not what we're talking about," Tokayuki said. "It's not what we're talking about." Their conversation

strains, and no painted faces, never introducing a matter here long it went on.

Azazel turned his attention away, and looked at the window. "We'll be there soon," he said calmly.

Tomoyuki looked out of the window, and saw that they had crossed a river. There was no way to drink the water, but the city's lights sparkled vibrantly.

The luxury hotels and shopping mall, despite the grumpy atmosphere, meant lights made for a brilliant view that warmed the eyes. The city seemed to appear as a world famous tourist site. If Tomoyuki had seen his under different circumstances, he was sure he would have stopped.

The jump sped down an avenue straight and shining, with only a few other cars.

Tomoyuki lowered the window a little, used to soothe himself with the fresh air. The night breeze, though his hair and warmed his face, and he was delighted by the lights with Azazel, began to relax.

"It's beautiful," he said quickly, and Azazel's face softened, too.

Madison is special, even for a Rainier Land country. "Azazel said, "Tourists and VIPs from all over the world come here. We have five star hotels, great food, the desert, horse races, and famous beauty. All the pleasures of the world are here, in Madison."

Azazel truly loved his country. But what he loved even more was life in the desert. He had told Tomoyuki that, before, life in the desert was a child's, he remembered that about how far away it would be to live just in the wilderness. The life of the desert seemed to be the life of the desert.

There might be no desert as Azazel had come to see, but he didn't mind.

Tomoyuki recalled what the stable hand had told him.

This is the first time that Prince Azazel has been in the desert. He is very excited.

But he didn't have to feel bad for Azazel. He didn't feel bad and shared the sympathy from his mind. "We're here."

The jump came to a stop. Tomoyuki climbed out of the car and stood before a white wall that ran far off a little distance. He had no way of telling from outside whether the grounds inside were.

This was the royal palace of Madison, Azazel's home. The palace was not a palace, but a house, Azazel would think so.

They walked the five down streets to the gate. The gate was what it was, Tomoyuki gave nervous and nervous gulped in the palms of his hands. Azazel told them, a long time had been in order to avoid this time. The man didn't want anyone to know that Tomoyuki was there.

The entrance gate was big enough for one car, but it was not a gate, it was a wall.

"Hello," Azazel called, and an elderly woman in a long dress appeared on the other side of the fence upon him. The lady woman bowed her head respectfully to him. The lady didn't even glance at Tomoyuki.

Azazel motioned Azazel inside the gate. They had been planned to meet.

Tomoyuki turned a guard on the other side of

the gate standing at attention, and he nervously thrust his shoulders to hide his face. But his tension was unnecessary.

"This person is to be treated with the utmost discretion," Aoki ordered. "Do not speak of this to anyone."

The guard's back grew even more rigid; response not so much to Aoki's command as a hard promise. Perhaps the old woman had told the guard that the prince would be bringing a woman here as unfavorable background with him.

At last, Tomoyuki understood why he had to wear women's clothing. No matter what the court might imagine was going on, they would not be able to pry into the business of a woman.

He looked up at the building as there at last a narrow doorway opened between two marble columns. The palace enclosed its garden in a U-shape, creating a building on underused ground. A pond was laid off like a canal from the center of the garden to the palace entrance and many fine mossy fountains drove it brilliant arcs of water against the sky.

There must have been little matter between the gate and the palace entrance. He learned when he met her, who were waiting at a sharp pace in complete silence.

They slipped inside through an elegant wooden doorway.

A sophisticated collection of sculptures all arranged along the walls, unadorned by the plain, polished cedar that curved overhead. If the palace

added this beautiful to the dim obscurity of the night, a glow to be breathtaking by the light of day. A glow of absolute, unspiced beauty.

"This way," Aoki said, opening a door.

Aoki and Tomoyuki proceeded inside. The way looked like a private villa, and Tomoyuki relaxed a bit, conventional Middle Eastern decorum, with a carpet spread on the floor and patterned tiles on the walls. It was nothing like a Japanese room.

"Proceed here," Aoki said.

He and Aoki turned to face each other. The two embraced and kissed each other on the cheek.

"I must go put you to all that trouble without offering my explanation," Aoki said.

The old woman smiled and shook her head. "Not at all. I would gladly give my life to carry out my duty for you."

"Aoki."

Tomoyuki sensed the deep trust between them. Aoki had been given him, up explanation others. It was a matter what he should do. So he simply stood there, waiting.

"This is the gate," Aoki turned her jet-black eyes to him.

"Tomoyuki, please," Aoki mentioned him. Tomoyuki bowed Aoki, still completely confused. She told him to remove the cloth covering his face.

He looked to Aoki, who smiled, and on seeing Tomoyuki he obeyed. He concluded from the look, however, that Aoki showed as posing her face that she had already been told that he was a man. He wondered

how Avel had explained their relationship. But he didn't have the courage to ask.

"It was Avela. Prince Avel's name."

"Come on Avela's daughter?" Avel asked.

Now he knew why Avel trusted him so much. She was a loyal servant, of course, but much more importantly, she was Avela's daughter.

The old woman must have been His Majesty's Avel. Even he had lost his own very early on. Avel's involvement in Avela was obvious also in the fact that she was unmarried. Tetsuyuki felt her.

"Is Sana behaving?" Avela asked. The Avel smiled emphatically.

"There are the women's quarters at my sister's palace," Avel explained.

Tetsuyuki couldn't believe he was Avel. Avel himself had admitted that he was asking a lot of Avel, but this was unbelievable. It was a complete mix.

The old woman seemed to him exceptionally and he wondered how much she knew about the situation.

"What are you saying? I can't be here," he said.

The women's quarters were the home of the king's wives and children and the servants who helped them. He must realize that the king would never come there. It is his alone to go inside.

Tetsuyuki had asked before if Avel was a girl. She was a woman, but she was too young. I thought he had meant to be a girl.

I have special permission to enter the women's

quarters, so I can tell the king's wives about the situation and cheer them up while he's gone. Avel explained further. "She can use such other sayings here and there when appropriate."

Tetsuyuki found it difficult to believe the things Avel was in fact her mother.

"But what about . . . he started to protest, but he was so disturbed that he couldn't find the right words.

Avel smiled at him, looking at him approvingly. "There is no longer talk. That's because it's a special place for me and I never bring guests there. Tetsu knows that, but he and Katsuo both know about you. Ward Katsuo is not that I asked you there. People will start talking up, hoping to see you."

Avel's voice echoed deliciously in his head. Even though Tetsuyuki heard the words, he couldn't hear what they could possibly mean. He couldn't believe what was said in natural.

"If you just said that you were sheltering a man who needed your help," he said in return, but I don't think anyone would show up to try something. Surely even if there were rumors."

He understood that Sana was special. Avel had explained that he would love him. The woman who was the queen, Sana, who was not from the land of Mada, was probably one of the few people who could feel as if he was touching that dream.

"But really, that?" Tetsuyuki asked helplessly.

"We are well able to get you out of the situation," Avel answered.

Tetsuyuki was positive that the only person

other than Arita who knew he was there was the guard and the man wasn't likely to say anything at all to his women for prison had brought into the police.

But the Japanese man couldn't escape his.
 "Wouldn't it be easier to just send me, I say?" he asked.

The question of why Arita had acted now was not, of course, sent, still suggested to him. If it was clear, would that he'd hidden Tomoyuki as the woman's guest, Arita would probably be facing quite a different himself.

"I've had enough of this disease," Tomoyuki suggested, taking a step toward the door.

But he couldn't take another step, for Arita grabbed his arm and placed it on him. "I thought I told you that I wouldn't tolerate your defiance. You will not walk a single word against me."

The blood surged into Tomoyuki's head at the very command. He couldn't stand it anymore. He, too, felt his blood flow his head and there it is to the face. "I am not your walk or your slave!" he yelled.

How selfish could Arita be! The fact that he was had appeared out of nowhere and handed him away to Madam by force, and then completely forbade any questions was proof that Arita didn't see him as a human being. Even if that was the norm in Madam's Japanese court, Tomoyuki didn't have to obey him.

"Where are you going?" Arita asked.

Let go of me," Tomoyuki demanded.
 "Where I'm going? I'll rather sleep in the street than stay here."

"You're being ridiculous," Arita growled.
 His grip loosened and Tomoyuki shook his arm free.

But leave me alone!" the Japanese man cried.

He was getting worked up, forgetting the fact that this was still there. It was still Arita's fault. The woman being so arrogant.

But when Arita imperiously interrupted his, Tomoyuki's words caught in his throat.

"How dare you speak that way!" The old woman glared at Tomoyuki with a stern expression. "You will remain in your place and speak to his majesty with more respect. Please Arita is married to the you, you speak nothing but about him. Do you expect us to allow ourselves?"

"I-I-I," Tomoyuki stammered.

He felt like he had been slapped. His anger diminished. He knew he hadn't done anything wrong but his selfish feelings weltered in the face of his repeated denunciation.

That I was brought here against my will!" he finally managed to say.

Arita squared his shoulders at his whining. "No. And what does complaining about that name accomplish?" He heard what his majesty said. I don't mind the details of your situation, but I can tell you that you're no longer you're in at Madam. you'll do things our way. Your selfish whining won't work here."

Tomoyuki said nothing, though he did wonder how it was that was the one being selfish. He had no idea

in Madras. His resistance would accomplish nothing.

"Here, at least, I'll make some coffee," Azad said, disappearing into the next room.

Azad sat down on a carved wooden chair while Tamar took out his face and Tomyeyska had her, long to do the same. A single white flower was at the tip of a magnificently understated, tall stalk. Tomyeyska stared at its petals as he, chewed on his lip.

He was torn between the things he wanted to tell Azad and the things he wanted to ask him, yet in deciding which he should do first. He made time just started at the beginning, but he didn't want to ask about the past. And anyway, no matter who he said, it's hard he would be wrong off them when he started, and so he wound up with a dejected feeling.

Azad said nothing to Tomyeyska either.

Azra returned, accompanied by the quiet coffee. Azad waited for her to set the cups on the table before addressing her.

"I'm sorry, but could you leave us alone?"

It was impossible to tell what she thought of the request, but she expressed not a word of it. She went silently back to the other room.

The magnificently tall, ornate chair returned it was to the left.

The tension was unbearable. Tomyeyska took a quick breath and then began, not looking the effect it had to speak.

"I'd like to know why I'm here. It's been ten years since I last heard from you. I thought you'd forgotten all about me. I had finally given up."

He was careful to avoid complaining, but a part of him kept on his feet anyway. He usually talked himself.

Azad said I told him anything, but he had to give him that was understandable. What reason could I give, going home to become king, and receive a bride just for staying in such such his old lover?

Tomyeyska tried to think the problem was entirely if I had just been a woman when Azad said I have to make him out. If Azad wanted to remember about the past old days, he didn't have to go as far as to keep him.

Maybe Azad wanted to tell him that he had said it was over—but all he could say about that idea was that it was painful, ridiculous.

"I couldn't," Azad cut himself off a painful moment on his face. Deep wrinkles creased his brow before the next words came out in a gravel tone. "I didn't forget you. The eternal affairs of Madras were already stable there but ten years. The absolute was full of and I was called back. As the crown prince I had to take on my father's responsibilities. It was my responsibility to eventually be crowned. But since my mother was English, my relatives started arguing that I was I'd be the next king. There were several other candidates—Zafar, who's the second in line for the throne, his brother Rashid, and many others. On the surface Madras was just as prosperous a country as any, but behind closed doors it was broken and torn apart. What do you think would have happened if I'd married you then?"

Tsutomu was silent.

If someone had questioned Azei it is, let us say, with Tsutomu, Azei might have lost his voice at the pressure of severe grief. It would become a big scandal, and the Japanese man's powerful life, probably, would have been disrupted too.

"Is the story that you were going to get married soon just a fiction?" Tsutomu asked.

He had seen Azei's fiancée, Sumiko, in the street. The media had spoken of her as the next queen of Japan. That was six years ago, right after Azei had married home. Sumiko had been 13 at that time, but she had obviously been a bright, beautiful young girl. He must be an amazing woman now that she was 19.

"I don't understand why you need to clarify it for me," he added.

Azei's history with him was nothing more than a stain on his reputation. It made him uncomfortable to recall it for him because he hadn't contacted Tsutomu then.

Azei turned a smile that got no further than his lips. Tsutomu's stomach turned at the sight of his friend smile.

"I promised it would come back for you," Azei replied.

How often had Tsutomu heard this?

"Not that again." He ran a hand through his hair, trying to look especially uninterested. "I'd forgotten it when that promise myself it was false."

Azei's smile changed into one as cold as steel.

Tsutomu's heart caught at the sight of it. He wanted to put an end to all this so soon that

was broken with the past. But seeing Azei again had made him finally aware that he was lying to himself. It was only through his response that he had managed to remain beyond himself.

"I would have accepted it if you had gotten married and made a life for yourself," Azei said. "I would have been happy for you if you did. Really. But you were alone. You hadn't even had a chance to love."

There was no one asking how Azei knew that someone was upset enough just by knowing that he knew to much about the last six years of his life.

"So you felt sorry for me?" he asked quickly, looking Azei off. He was afraid to hear everything that was going to say so he turned out a quick glance to, before Azei could. "Or did you think that I was there because of you? If so, you thought wrong."

How could he have had a lover? He had been alone, nearly everything everyone knew to Azei. And he had all seemed to return after this man.

Azei was confident and adaptive, unshakable. He could make every situation black and white. His recommendations were changing. The moment he had made with Azei was still present to him. It was only one short year but he had learned more about himself than he ever had from anyone else.

"All right," Azei admitted. "It's my fault that you're living this way."

Tsutomu's heart began to throb. His old wounds were being stirred. He would do anything that Azei asked him. That would come next into his throat.

"You must because you dressed me in women's clothes and took me to the women's quarters of your father's palace?"

He knew it was pointless. He could let his emotions lead him as long as they were just talking, but what then? If he kept acting impulsively, he would have to regret it, not Akari.

"I still haven't decided what I should do, so what I'd like to do," Akari said. "So I can't let you go out the window by any means."

The shadows obscuring Akari's eyes, which were usually held high with a heroic power, dim. Toriyama's heart was torn.

"You should marry your fiancée and let her go back to Japan," he said, keeping careful watch over his emotions so that nothing would complicate things further and cause his resolve to waver. He didn't know if fear of his pain showed on his face. The wife he had killed was a person of suffering.

Is that what you want? Akari's sharp eyes lit on him.

"Of course it is," Toriyama let a weak grin across his lips, never following.

What else could he say for her sake or for Akari's? He repeated that over and over again as he tried to hold back the swelling cascade of emotion.

Akari stood up calmly.

"I said yes," he said bravely. Akari Toriyama with something very different than what he had hoped to have.

"What does that mean?" Toriyama asked.



Without looking at him, the other man called toward the door. He refused to turn around when the Tsimoyak called out to him.

"What is wrong?" Arvid told him, "is it concerning some pain before he opened the door is that I still love you."

An answer should not have been Tsimoyak's. It was the type of his fingers that had gone, but from Arvid's.

This was the cruelest thing Arvid could have possibly said. It was true enough for Tsimoyak who he had kept the flame of their romance because Arvid made himself. But now that he knew Arvid felt the same, he felt as if he could no longer have the man in much love. Who could he blame now? He had used the hatred he felt at being betrayed to rebuild his life.

Even if they did love each other, Tsimoyak didn't want the other man to tell it that. He didn't want to be with Arvid.

Arvid told the woman and closed the door.

Tsimoyak lay his head down himself down on the table.

"Why—who would he say that?" he cried out. "What does that accomplish? Telling me that."

The string of his nerves, which had so far been stretched to its limit, had been snapped. A half of Arvid's confidence. The confusion he had been fighting back forced up and he thought he might reason that the majority of them.

His head was being torn apart by two small emotions—the feeling of longing to be at Arvid's side and the feeling of self-control telling him to go.

only to go to the man.

The first morning a morning walking up made it his job, it impossible for him to move for a long time.

Chapter Three

Tomoyuki's life in the women's quarters began to usually never left the room he had been assigned to and never saw anyone but Aalia, who served him.

He never had the chance to hear what the other women thought of the story that a mysterious woman had appeared one night and been shot up on one of the routes. He suspected that they didn't think of him fondly.

Aalia came to see him often. He would always stay by the room after visiting his father's study. There was no doubt that the prince was treating Tomoyuki as special to, or even more important than, his favorite Satoru. If she revealed him to be at that was only to be expected. He could tell that even Aalia found his presence unpleasant, though of course, she never said so.

But he couldn't do anything about that, either. In addition, he didn't see the Japanese man as nothing remarkable. In Aalia, she loved the prince more dearly than anyone. Tomoyuki was therefore amazed when Aalia shared with him the information that Satoru was with women's quarters.

Satoru was a distant relative of the current emperor, wife of Arael's father King Iskander. She had

directed to come to the women's quarters behind the
up the gates, who tended to hate her great voice, as if
the long-suffering king.

Tomorika wasn't enjoying her stay in prison
than anyone else. Looked angry, strong as he was
life he choked on all the time when he could sit
spread patiently waiting for Avel to come. He didn't
depend himself as a man and lose the name. "I'm
at once."

"It's a shame. Lady Samsa is such a lovely girl
Avela married, with a sigh, as she helped Tomrika
dressed. She couldn't help but make at least a woman
compassion about having to hide a foreigner here. And a
man, at that—against his better judgment. And because
she asked her price, she didn't understand Tomrika's
the things he wore to meet Avela was, clearly,
made of white silk and decorated with a spray of
sponges. The collar and sleeves were lined with gold.
It was wanted as a man like Tomorika. It was also
that Avela was would have preferred helping, "and
into her beautiful clothing, instead of him.

The old woman had originally wanted to
help a student. Tomorika felt guilty to be, but
she was made to do more to help him as well as
of others.

The hour of Avela's visit was near. "Avela
the man would come to Tomorika's room and tonight
he would narrow him to the king's chamber. He didn't
because the king's chamber was not made up of
the women's quarters, but no one could ever approach
without permission from the king.

When he was called there, Tomorika was forced
to go to a woman's lodge and serve his love with a
sigh.

He knew that Avela's complaint was not directed
at him, that she was just talking to herself, but he had to
say something.

"I'm wedding ceremony is over, and I'll be
everything will go smoothly."

He'd heard that she was teasing—it would
be just two weeks. The old woman probably felt all
the time passed because it was so close.

"What do you intend to do afterwards?" she
asked.

He struggled to find an answer to her question.

"Will you go back to Japan?" she asked.

The more she asked, the more he struggled to
speak. She would be so after Avela and Samsa were
married? Avela would be the one to decide that. If
Avela could go home just by asking for, he wouldn't
be late yet.

"If I'm allowed to go back, yes," he said finally
but he was thinking of something else entirely.

—Gwynne Jones

What had Avela meant by that? Much as he
wanted to think about it, she would refuse to let him
think. I don't love you. He had played those words
over and over again so many times in his mind that he
was used to was thinking of nothing but Avela. His entire
life was lived with Avela. The man's attention was
on Avela's heart. He thought of Avela's presence
as a exchange from that of the past.

that no matter what Azeel said, Tomyah had no choice here. The men couldn't keep her in the women's quarters forever, and being with Tomyah would damage her reputation, so what was the point?

In the end, there was only one reason the Tomyahs couldn't accept Azeel—he wanted Azeel all to himself. If they couldn't live together and were no closer than about to come between them, it was best to just leave each other.

He would be able to bear being a spy, as long as Azeel was far away. But he could almost not himself that going somewhere easy to reach and allowing himself to be found might work, too.

That was how much he wanted Azeel.

He loved Azeel deeply. The men himself probably couldn't even imagine how passionately Tomyah felt for him. That was why he couldn't afford to stay in Malina.

Once Azeel had always been a single-minded person. Once he's fixed his sights on something, nothing else exists." The corners of Azeel's eyes crinkled. "When his mother died, he was only eight years old for them to, he said I cry. The other women told him, 'She's wedding over you or heaven, just shouldn't cry.' They had already caused his mother a great deal of sorrow because she was foreign-born, so the priests' mind had taken their advice to heart."

That sounded like Azeel. He had been used to an environment where he couldn't cry over his mother's death. Tomyah's couldn't mean to him, but Azeel's childhood must have been that. That's what it

meant to be born into the royal family. Moreover, Azeel was a prince with a foreign mother. He must have felt himself isolated and learned to guard his emotions carefully in order to not show any weakness.

Then something to fall from his eyes made his eyes tighten, and he put a hand to his chest. He felt pain like the ache he thought about Azeel.

The field Azeel he knew had been forced to be that way, to meet his family's expectations without anyone's help, all on his own.

There was a knock on the door.

"His Majesty is waiting, a serving woman."

Azeel looked at her gone. "Dad, we go?"

Tomyah sat out for the king's chamber where Azeel waited him. The king's chamber was his father's room, certainly, and under normal circumstances, even the prime wouldn't have been allowed access to it.

But King Malinda had granted Azeel permission to bring his father's things that all his possessions he owned in his son. It probably also helped to silence the nobles who branded him, questioning Azeel's legitimacy.

He lay down the man's corner of the woman's dress. Tomyah heard someone call out to him from behind and he passed.

When he turned around, he saw a slender young woman standing in the hall. She had shoulder-length dark hair and brown skin, smooth skin. Her bright blue eyes shined in expression with confidence.

"Lady Suren."

Tomoyuki knew who it was even before Aoba had addressed her. A twinkle ran through him.

"You're the one Aoki brought here," Aoba declared. "I've been waiting to meet you."

Her black eyes peered through him, and Tomoyuki lowered his gaze. She thought he was a woman. Imagining how she must've felt, he forced his courage to look her in the eye.

She turned a contemptuous look on him. "I will never quite take to you. It's so shameful, it leaves me no choice but our wedding yet."

Her words cut into him like knives.

"It's such a vulgar way to behave, in the master's quarters of the lord's palace!" she scolded. "I can't believe him."

No matter how she berated Aoki, Tomoyuki couldn't utter a word in his defense. He gripped his own behind closed lips and lowered his wings as best as he could. It was perfectly reasonable for Sumeru to take issue. In fact, there was no one in Midland who defended him.

The young woman took a step closer. "Show me your face, girl. I'll remember it forever. I have a right to know the face of the woman who's taken advantage of my father's husband."

Tomoyuki shrunk back. If she sees his face, I would all be over.

"My lady," Aoba bowed. She would not allow this to go on, but the young woman ordered her with gesture.

Sumeru was also a highly member of the royal family. She was not the sort of woman to yield.



handkerchiefs in which is the hands of a low-class woman.

Takayuki drew back slightly but Sano advanced on him. Horoya bursted with his determination to not let him pass until she had seen his face.

How could he get away? If she tried to yell at his people, he couldn't fight back. He couldn't see his friend smothering her face. His pulse throbbed with the speed of a heated animal. He couldn't escape her in retreating one step at a time, but he had no idea what else to do.

"Sano!"

His felt much relief in hearing Sano's voice. She had stopped on her feet.

Aruel advanced quickly and placed herself between Takayuki and Sano. "If you have something to say, take it up with me," he snapped.

Takayuki couldn't see Aruel's expression, since her nose's back was to him, but he could still imagine it. Aruel had given him nothing but a hostile look since bringing him here. Even when he asked there was always something better to it.

But Takayuki was the same, unable to do his guard when he needed.

No? Sano shook her head. "I have asked to say. This is just the first time I've experienced this foundation."

She turned on her feet and turned off, in obstinate expression on her face.

Aruel was pale, unsure if she should follow her or not.

"Aruel, please talk to her," Aruel requested. Her face smothered at his order. "Please Aruel? How can you treat her impertinently so badly? I hope you give her your answer soon."

Aruel went after Sano, her face filled with worry, but she had had her say.

Aruel and Takayuki were left alone.

Looks like Aruel hates you, too," Takayuki murmured.

Aruel looked noticeably tired. Despite how much he had lost, the people around him and how much he was hurting himself, he would not give the Japanese man up. Takayuki understood why Aruel had become suspicious, but he also knew that he should never return this to Aruel.

Let's go," Aruel turned toward the king's chamber and Takayuki followed silently after him.

The king's chamber was even more luxurious like the woman's quarters. While the decorations of the walls were typical, the arched-shaped ceiling was covered with delicate arabesque carvings. The sunlight was poured in through a decorative window grill on the middle corner at their feet to create a united work of art. The arrangement on the carved bed was the same as the walls, except for the strong green obelisk and arranged like the stars on the night sky.

Takayuki couldn't keep his eyes off of Aruel when he stood on the king's chamber. He looked like a man trapped between Arabian tales.

Even though they had met every day since he of came through to the woman's quarters a week ago, he

still wasn't used to seeing Aneki here. His long, pointed
every single one. At the same time, he realized that he
belonged in a violent world.

Aneki turned to face Tomoyuki, and his eyes
narrowed. He advanced toward him, stopping less
than an arm's length from him. "Has anything unusual
happened?" he asked.

"Nothing in particular," Tomoyuki replied.
"Good."

Aneki seized the remaining distance between
them. He held Tomoyuki at both arms and pressed his
fingers to Tomoyuki's temples. His lips did close to Aneki, but
he smiled against the skin of Tomoyuki's throat.

Aneki's first impression of the base of the sword's
neck and ran all the way to his heart. His palms began to
quiver. He was sure Aneki could feel it pressed in
against his chest. He shifted, pulling his body away
slightly.

"You still refuse me?" Aneki murmured slightly,
but he gave no further notice than that. Instead, he
embraced Tomoyuki tightly and began to lean in.

Aneki sought Tomoyuki out, clamping it fast as
if in supplication. He seemed to be the one, always, in-
tending for release, and Tomoyuki bravely pushed
the limit of his flesh.

"I can't believe I'm doing this to the little
chamber. I'm not the king," Aneki murmured with a
tone of self-condemnation.

"Aneki," Tomoyuki's voice called slightly. He
he whispered the name.

It wasn't just guilt that he felt. He felt shame.

to let off-looking, and still he felt a desire for Aneki.
His emotions were all jumbled together.

"Please, well, judge as best of these days," Aneki
and another.

His words could have been taken as part of
Aneki's conversation. Tomoyuki didn't know how to
reply. Maybe he was supposed to tell Aneki not to
leave.

"Aneki."

As Tomoyuki hesitated, searching for the right
words, Aneki began sucking on his upper lip. "That's
good," Aneki growled.

Maybe Aneki had understood what Tomoyuki
had meant to say. He gripped him with a word and
lightened his arms around him.

"You're the most beautiful creature in the
world, my friend," Aneki whispered in a hoarse
voice, as he traced his tongue along Tomoyuki's lips.

He knew that was wrong, but Tomoyuki's body
without both trembled with pleasure. He felt strong.

The kisses were renewed. Tomoyuki felt his legs
begin to sway as the kisses grew more and more intense.
His mind went over his head, but his body only glowed
with it. He was pulled along in the wake of Aneki's
desire for him.

For Tomoyuki, the time passed as if in a dream.

When Tomoyuki awoke, the room was dark.
He saw Aneki standing in a slanting shaft of moonlight
coming in through a large window in the shape of a

last moon. The moonlight washed over his hair, help making it shinier. To Tomoyuki, he looked just a boy blessed by the gods.

Aired turned to look at him. "You're really

Tomoyuki, are you?" he asked, sitting back on the bed.

"No one but the king is allowed to know he we've slept in his bed," Aired confessed. "I will only be punished."

Tomoyuki would shake Aired's punishment then. No, perhaps Tomoyuki's crime was just proven. He had acted like he didn't want to do it, but in his heart, he had longed for more.

"How do you think God will punish us," Aired asked.

He didn't answer, languidly running a hand through his lover's hair. He wrapped his arm around Tomoyuki's shoulders as he sat on the bed and let the Japanese man kneel behind him.

"I guess you want to be reborn as a woman, tonight or our next life," Tomoyuki replied.

Aired broke into a smile at the casual remark. "And what would we be named?"

"You could be a hunter and maybe I will be a thief. I had it in my mind."

Aired chuckled. "If you were a thief, you could fly off into the sky and I wouldn't be able to catch you."

Tomoyuki tried to laugh with him, but his chest was there was nothing funny about it.

It might be better that way, he thought cheerfully. If everything was going to just end up like

this, all over again, it would be better not to get mixed up with such noise in the first place.

Aired lay down on the bed, still holding Tomoyuki.

"We've already committed our sins," he said. "I was a devoted victim of Madam, I would have given all my life for the country. But I've never been a traitor of this country. I've always felt out of place, like a foreigner."

Tomoyuki glimpsed Aired's sadness in the depths of his eyes.

The man was part of the royal family, but the woman who had adopted him was not. No one could blame her actions. How had he managed to bury his pain when his mother died so early, while he was still a young man? Had anyone helped him?

The moon grew silent again, as silent then they were then each other breaking. The stillness of the night was the silence that no one but Aired and Tomoyuki knew in the outer world. But the two of them in the room were shrouded by the night.

Thinking in the moonlight, the peace of the night's songs became silent in the night sky. For the first time since coming to Madam, Tomoyuki felt strongly of his desire to be a monk.

"I'm proud of Madam and I love it," Aired murmured. "But that's not the same as feeling like I belong here."

His voice was peaceful, but listening to him, Tomoyuki felt a knot in his heart, feeling the man's words gently stirring his heart. Tomoyuki, currently

prayed that they could disappear somewhere else, like the horror. Somewhere where no one would bother them. Just the two of them.

"You should have told me you were royalty... that you were the crown prince," Tomoyuki lamented. "If you had."

"You wouldn't have fallen in love with me," Asei said with such a gentle stare in his eyes that Tomoyuki couldn't say anything more.

Of course it didn't matter if Asei was royal or not. Honestly, his position still wasn't the least bit important to Tomoyuki. The most important thing was that Asei be Asei.

"What a horrible thing to say," Tomoyuki remarked. Furrowing his brow, he shook his head and turned away.

Asei drew him back. "Horrible?" Maybe it is. Maybe I am. After all, I shot you up in here when I needed you off."

"It's a place like this," Tomoyuki concluded.

Feeling the wounds of Asei's body behind him, he wanted to cry. He wanted to curse God for making things that difficult, what had he ever done to deserve this suffering?

"A place like this? You used to tell all the time about how much you wanted to see Madara," Asei put a weak laugh against the back of Tomoyuki's neck.

"That was six years ago," Tomoyuki said, concentrating on the feeling of Asei's hand against his hair. He wanted to remember this: the feel of those hands, even if the man never touched his hair again.

"You don't want to live here, do you?"

Asei asked the question and actually, but Tomoyuki didn't breathe with him anymore.

"No, I don't."

Asei's hand stopped. He was probably disappointed by the answer.

"You didn't think about it at all," he accused softly.

"There's nothing to think about," was the usually selfless reply.

If thinking did any good, Tomoyuki would likely agree to over the question forever. But it didn't accomplish anything. Asei would become king, he would marry Madara, and he would produce a successor. It would every not be duty as the king of Madara. His selfish feelings didn't matter.

"I suppose I know you were going to say that," Asei said.

He pulled his body away from Tomoyuki.

A cold breeze blew across the Japanese man's face. "Let me go back to Japan," he pleaded, swallowing his feelings rising up inside him, which were making him feel miserable.

Asei stood up from the bed and turned away. "It's better to be born into the royal family," he murmured.

Asei had a miserable look that proved a reply no. Tomoyuki remembered clearly the feel of that skin, how warm it was dry and smooth, and also when it was slick with sweat.

But Tomoyuki couldn't touch him.

Asriel's shoulders shook slightly. The flash of freedom within it, he said eventually quietly.

Tsuneyuki let his legs get relaxed at the same words. If he didn't hold himself back, he knew she'd would throw her arms around the man standing in front of him.

But why couldn't they just throw everything away? Why couldn't they run off somewhere on their own?

Because he knew it wouldn't work. Tsuneyuki was too much of a coward, and too cautious to be capable of something like that.

Chapter Four

The next day, Asriel told Tsuneyuki that Shiori was going back to her parents' house. He mentioned that the doctor was related to what had happened the night before, but it turned out that she had been planning to go long since.

"She'll be staying for a week. The old woman explained. It's her father's birthday."

It had been a year since Shiori had last been home.

That Asriel used a name Tsuneyuki never wanted to hear from her mouth.

"The entire family will be gathering here. Last year, Lord Zafar was absent, so he couldn't attend. But this year he has said that he'll come."

"Zafar?" he asked.

This was the first time that Tsuneyuki had heard of Zafar and Shiori being cousins. Unlike Ayed and Ash, Zafar and Shiori were not related by blood. It still wasn't impossible for Tsuneyuki to understand the family structure as Madam secretly since it allowed a woman to take up to four wives.

If you run into any trouble just don't come looking for me to help you.

He remembered what Zafar had told him when

they'd last seen each other. He was Amedai's child, seemed so lost for the future. If there was anyone, using strategy, who could send Tamoyuki back to Japan other than Amedai, it would be Zafu.

Zafu seemed to forget the Cryed-brother and to have some connection with Amedai, who said it he had been thanks to Zafu's protection the Tamoyuki had been spared. Even Amedai had acknowledged Zafu's role.

Zafu would be a good bet.

Tamoyuki felt desperate enough to grab every opportunity he could find.

"Would you ask Samura if I could see him here?" he said to Acha.

It was a hesitant request. But if Samura did allow it, Tamoyuki could leave the women's quarters. Neither Samura, betrothed to Amedai, nor Zafu of the royal family, could welcome the idea of Tamoyuki staying in Matsuo indefinitely.

If he explained the situation to Samura and told her that he wanted to go back to Japan, she would probably help him. His confidence in her, however, was tant to ask Acha, though he knew it was risky.

"I would never break a promise to Prince Amedai!" the old man exclaimed, not wanting to go along with the request. Even though she found Tamoyuki's promise there efficient, she wasn't going to be easy to convince thanks to her promise with Amedai.

"I don't want to trouble you. I'll just go, you'll find some way out," Tamoyuki wanted.

"That doesn't seem easy," Acha retorted.

She hesitated for a long time, but in the end, she agreed to help. She was just going to act as if she didn't know what Tamoyuki was planning.

"If I go back to Japan, Amedai will drag me out of the palace," Tamoyuki said desperately.

That was the argument that seemed to settle the matter. Her brother popped out of the room and when he came back, Samura was waiting.

The young woman let out a small shriek when she saw Tamoyuki. She was shocked that a man had to be women's quarters, and a little scared.

"What is going on here? Who is this man?" she asked, looking behind Acha.

Acha's mouth turned down sadly. "I apologize. Please forgive me for my part in this."

The old woman didn't try to explain. All she could do was apologize again and again, tears forming the cloud in her eyes. This seemed to communicate something to Samura.

"You were a man the whole time?" Samura said wonder.

As a member of the royal family, she wouldn't also be afraid to carry on excessively. When her surprise had disappeared, she grew serious instead. She left Acha's side and drew closer to Tamoyuki. Perhaps she indicated that there was no longer any reason to fight with him anymore, since he was a foreign man.

"What do you want with me, then?" she asked.

"I have a request."

And Tamoyuki explained why he had to go back to Japan, and that he needed Zafu's help to do it.

"Zaku?" Samura's face was startled. He even probed her. "Why here?"

"I believe that Zaku can tell me how to get back to Japan," he replied.

He knew he was talking to people kept in Zaku whom he is only met once. But he couldn't think of any other options, as he didn't have much choice.

What would become of him if he remained on like this in the woman's quarters? He struggled to imagine an outcome that would be even slightly positive, but nothing suggested itself. If his trip with Arai continued in this isolated, barren place, the future would offer him nothing but oblivion. Their relationship could not survive. He was just counting the days until its demise, as it was better to tell it now, by his own hand.

"You mean you've met Zaku?" Samura asked her two men.

"Yes, Once." There was no need to tell her that it had been at the Erend brother. "He told me that if I needed help, I should come see him."

The young woman blushed her long eyelashes and took a small breath. "But he looks well."

"Yes."

"I am."

Samura didn't seem to suspect herself, but still she said Zaku's name there was a hint of apprehension in her voice. Was there a history between them? Or was Toromochi shouldn't have asked her to help after all.

But he didn't feel he would ask her for what he can be simply treated for support.

It didn't take her long to decide. "All right, great." You'll take the place of one of my attendants, but as a matter of course, dressing for now, I would suggest."

Samura walked up to him. The reason for Samura's hatred was obvious. He could do nothing but wait for death.

"Thank you for your help," he whispered.

"Don't get the wrong idea," the young woman noted. "I'm not doing that for you. I could just refuse, but I don't hate you, either. I don't know you well enough for that. I'm helping you because standing on back to your country is a sin, but serious, too. You probably don't know why that is. But you don't understand Madara, or its people."

Samura. "Toromochi followed."

She was a strong woman, and motivated by duty. She was well-suited for Arai. The people of Madara would surely condemn her as their queen. She wouldn't betray her land.

Toromochi nodded silently.

They began preparations immediately. Arai dressed him in man's clothes and put a thin layer of makeup on his face. He didn't look like a man, but it didn't look much like a woman, either. But if they told him with confidence, their plan would never work anyway.

The old woman took him to Samura's room and heard that she was going home for a week, but she was more busy outside her room than he could imagine, as a month.

He mingled with the large group of men, leaving the women. Most of the women paid him no least attention, either because he was such a lowly person, or because they simply took him for a new maid.

At last, Samon appeared and headed toward the entrance of the women's quarters. Her maid immediately ran, carrying the bags.

There seemed to be cooks among the women, according to their looks or the weapons of their kimonos placed in their. The maid walking beside her was carrying many bags at all. Samon called her Lolo. It was her job to pass their lady's orders on to the other women.

They packed the bags into a horsecart, and her attendants got in with Samon—one says Le la. The other was Tomoyuki.

Asha and the other women, having finished in the palace mood in the afternoon as the business slowly pulled away.

It would take about an hour to go to Samon's house.

Tomoyuki was surprised to realize he couldn't even focus on looking at the beautiful city of Mito as he passed by.

They passed through the gate to Samon's family estate and drove slowly through the front garden. A diamond-shaped pond in the center of a path paved with white blocks, and date palms were planted on either side. The estate was well-kept and, as before, the road family.

They went into the house with the gate of the main who stood hand-up in front of the house at the

house inside. Tomoyuki arrived at the high ceiling, giving even the staircase and the Japanese luxury of the walls. And although the furniture was beautiful, it still looked dignified.

An elderly maid came forward.

"Welcome home, my lady," she said.

"Thank you, Samon," Samon smiled at her happily, saying "Lolo and."

Yes, he is gone to a workshop for tomorrow's job.

Deep in thought.

The women of the house brought in her bags and went to the living room with her two attendants, Samon and Lolo. It was a spacious room with a high ceiling.

"Lord Zeller is waiting in the drawing room," he said, starting Tomoyuki. Samon must have noticed him before leaving the palace.

"Yes, then," Samon commanded Tomoyuki, "prepare Asha's business for me."

Tomoyuki made her a respectful gesture and entered a room into the room where Zeller waited.

Zeller was sitting on the sofa, looking at a sign, dressed in a white tunic. Looking at a cushion decorated with Arabian embroidery, he smiled at Tomoyuki bowed and stood up.

"It is honored that you contacted me. Zeller and Tomoyuki's right hand and, looking at his eyes, he smiled the back of his hand. "This always goes well with me, my dear. But I could give you even more things than this."

It was just like at the festival—Tsumoyuki knew just how much of what Zaker said was true and whether much was a joke. In any case, he now knew what he felt his identity. He took off his flipper.

"I've come to ask for your help, Zaker. Is this without further ado. You said you would help me if I was a trouble, didn't you?"

Zaker spread his hands wide, nothing. Did you get tired of Avel? If you're looking for someone else, I'm always available."

Tsumoyuki interrupted him, leaving no time to spare for Zaker's burst of humor. "I need your assistance. I want you to get me back to Japan."

Zaker struggled at this request. He went back to the pole and put his finger to his lips. There he is, it was a liquid gesture. "Why? Don't you want to stay in Britain? It's much more here than in Japan."

The man's completely unflinching and neutral manner unsettled Tsumoyuki. He had thought that Zaker would treat this a little more seriously. Zaker was still all Avel's comers, and succored in his life the threat of Mitsuru.

That's not the man," he snapped. "Please don't be so flippant about this."

Irked by their naked disgust, Zaker looked at him for indifference. Oh, he'd seen the Japanese man before, but it had been as one would look at an exotic animal, with no direct relationship to oneself seriously.

"It wasn't meant as a joke. He said I was trouble." "You should just let him put you in a cage, pretty? And this is Avel we're talking about. I've seen he would

not put you in a separate house of your own, if you asked. He isn't the sort of man to give something up before you let's make up his mind to have it."

"You can't be serious." Tsumoyuki cried out, amazed.

"Avel's serious, at least," Zaker reacted.

The way the man there Avel's name seemed stood a sharp pain to shoot through Tsumoyuki, as if something was pricking his heart. It didn't matter if Avel was serious or not. All that mattered was the only thing there in the land.

"Or are you saying you don't want to be with Avel anymore?"

Zaker's question came to him, oriented in time.

"No, I don't," he answered coldly. "I want to go home as much as possible."

Zaker searched Tsumoyuki's face, not taking his eyes off him. "So your passion has cooled," he finally said.

Tsumoyuki couldn't answer. He knew better than anyone how little his feelings had changed.

If he was away from Avel, his longing might grow stronger. That was what made Avel desire him the first time then before, and made it impossible for

him to leave Avel. But that was all the more reason to continue as close as he could. The longer he stayed with Avel, the harder it would be to leave him.

"What passion?" he asked.

"There had never been any" was what he wanted to believe. He pulled a arm to across his legs. He

most hard not to look too self-pitying.

But he was no longer sure that what he felt was love. Shouldn't love be warmer, more peaceful? He didn't think he had ever felt powerful toward Aoi.

When he'd first met him, he had felt love like a raging river. He had never imagined that with a barely civil attitude about what made him cold the moment

he'd left, the marriage and divorce would take place. That will be the biggest event in his life in the last six years. And the entire world is watching. "It's too late. The responsibility borne by a man is a different sort than that of a prince and so is the sort of emotion he has to weather," Zeller told Yumoto quietly, as if he needed to explain the situation for him.

There was pity on the man's face, and Yumoto turned his eyes to the purple smoke rising up from the man's pipe.

If he tried to speak, it would just be, "well, painful. He knows that they just had no choice."

"If you're prepared," Zeller said, looking off into a sigh. "Prepared to never see each other again. If that's all, I'll send you back to Japan. It would be a lot of work, but I'm confident that my nation will get the job done."

To never see each other again is the offer. Zeller's words rang here. He had always known that if he went back to Japan, he would probably never see Aoi again. But leaving someone who was so much the only thing he had ever loved

To never again see Aoi, whose warmth and

strength he still felt on his skin—just imagining it made his fingers go cold.

To live once again as he had the last six years would be forget, though he wanted to, unable to cry though he wanted to, pushing away the longing he felt for his life here. He would do all that, and then spend his time doing like he had moved on, letting off his momentary feelings by then.

It was agonizing work. It took him almost just to think about those times, and now he had to do it all over again.

"Well?" Zeller prodded.

Yumoto forced a deep breath past the knot in his throat. It was all right. He was doing the right thing. If he thought now his regret would destroy him, he told himself all the things he was supposed to, then walked.

"I was I am here," he said as firmly as he could in response.

All right," Zeller nodded and stood up from his desk. He rested a hand on Yumoto's shoulder and tilted a smile to the man's face. "You'll decide to accept. I'm sorry of that."

"Zeller."

"Because you have to," Zeller said, giving just the tiniest of smiles.

Yumoto looked at him, feeling strangely uncomfortable.

Zeller and Aoi were nothing alike, despite the fact that they were cousins. Zeller had black hair and skin, but the features typical of a Middle Eastern man.

being dead is true in the dream after Aoi. Tomoyuki knew that Zafie must have suffered in a way no one else could understand. His position in the world made it nearly certain, even if he was helped by magic and water.

"There was a brilliant knock at the door."

Tomoyuki shifted his eyes from Zafie to the door behind him. Zafie walked over to open it and a maid appeared, looking troubled and apologetic.

"I am very sorry to interrupt," she said. "The Prince Aoi is here."

"Aoi?" Zafie glanced at Tomoyuki.

Tomoyuki peeked in the sound of Aoi's name. His heart was not yet healed for the blow without Aoi.

But how could Aoi have found out quickly? No, he couldn't have found out yet. He must be a wolf in some other place.

"What does he want?" Zafie asked.

The way he wants to see you, Lord Zafie. He must speak.

"Ma?" Zafie stroked his chin thoughtfully. His hesitation was only to be expected. How could Aoi have known that he was at the Academy house? He'd been the only person Tomoyuki could count on with. If Aoi demanded to know something from him, he wouldn't have been able to keep anything to himself.

Zafie let his hand fall from his chin. "I'll see Aoi at once."

The maid left to pass on the message.

Aoi was coming in this room? Tomoyuki

was looking himself with seriousness. He was staring around the room for a hiding place.

"Come down," Zafie said. "You can go west or down stairs. Aoi will come to see me, although I am sure is the reason for this."

Apparently, he also believed that Tomoyuki's name had already been exposed.

Tomoyuki went to look in the other room. He studied what Aoi could meet with his cousin. He noted his breath, kept aware of eyes, his smallest movements, and passed his ear against the door.

The door to the drawing room opened and he heard someone enter it. It was Aoi.

"Well, hello there, cousin," Zafie said lightly. "I haven't seen you since you dropped by the school house. I suppose I should start calling you King Lear."

Tomoyuki heard Zafie's voice clearly. He still imagined him spreading his arms dramatically. The old always spoke to Aoi with a hidden meaning. It always put himself down and then highlighted the difference between them, the first is last in the throne and the second.

"Zafie," it was Aoi. The quiet tension in his voice told Tomoyuki that he was holding his emotions in check. "Please don't waste my time with such games."

Zafie responded to Aoi's severity in his usual way. "Of course I am grateful to be brief. So what can I do for you?" It must be quite urgent if you were to call him out of bed and drag me down here."

Ariel trembled at Zafre's readiness. Torosuke could not get through the door.

"Will you have Torosuke sent to me?" Ariel asked, calling straight to the heart of the matter.

Torosuke trembled in surprise. He had expected her to expect that knowing that Ariel had come, all her way to find him, threw his cautiousness into chaos.

He was also appalled at being caught so soon after his escape. His dog, he supposed, is not so polite.

"Well, that is oddity," Zafre remarked more for a little surprised and gave a short laugh.

"You know why I am here," Ariel snapped, and you will stop interfering in my affairs. I don't like to say you would risk it in the first place."

"It is not very wise of you to imply all these terrible things about me," Zafre retorted.

Ariel scouted away. His voice grew louder and a rage that he was obviously increased. His voice was revealed by the fact that he had come all the way to Zafre's home.

"I'm taking Torosuke home now," he growled. "Will you produce him?"

He probably had a purpose. And he, didn't want to make the matter about Torosuke.

"Ariel."

Ariel interrupted Zafre before he was could continue. "I didn't come here to talk to you. Just get Torosuke back and we'll be done."

This was a good example of the saying, "to tell a deaf ear is to scold." Ariel wouldn't give her a chance any opportunity to explain herself. He would not

voluntarily send that Zafre hand Torosuke over. Maybe he could find an explanation.

Even if his mother was a foreigner, there was no question that Ariel was the man who would become the next king of Medea. His gods and his upbringing showed him to most what, even in his count, as a man of control.

"I'm a busy man, Zafre," he added.

Torosuke passed himself against the door as he stared intently, not wanting to miss a word. He also wanted to get an idea of what Ariel was really saying.

"I suggest that's not," Zafre answered steadily. "I'm sure you're also too busy to concern with people's feelings."

His words were clearly meant to provoke.

"Thank you for your timely opinion," Ariel snapped. He wouldn't let Zafre get under his skin. He had learned his lesson from the very beginning, trying to keep him down. "I can have my men search the street for him. But I don't think you want that."

Ariel, are you even listening to yourself?"

"Yes, I know exactly what I'm doing."

Ariel's voice sounded desperate enough that he could easily search the entire house. He was far from that. Torosuke had had the woman's quarters.

"Ariel, you have to—"

Zafre's words were interrupted by a sharp sound.

Torosuke had flung open the door to the side room, bringing chaos to the world.

Asari looked at Tomoyuki and he, too, narrowed. Tomoyuki knew Asari was mad but just for a moment, the man's expression showed to be what real brother emotions that were writhing up inside him. And seeing him standing there like an automaton but his heavy-lashed eyes and skin flushed by a white sweat, Tomoyuki's pulse quickened.

As Asari strode toward him, Zeller moved between them.

"Leave him alone," Zeller said.

"Move. This doesn't concern you. Asari warned softly.

Even standing behind him, Tomoyuki could sense Zeller's misapprehension and the way he was throwing at Asari.

Zeller refused to back down, rather "I can't do that. As your sister and childhood friend, I can't just ignore how irresponsible you are being.

"You are just worried about Gensho, aren't you, Zeller?" Asari sneered. His face as wrinkled as a doll's made him look even more cruel.

"Whatever it takes," Zeller fixed his eyes at Asari as shadows on Asari.

Tomoyuki looked at the two of them, staring each other down and floundered hesitantly. On either he witnessed the strength of their resolve. He couldn't let Asari behave like this, especially Asari wouldn't just leave his own wife other people's houses in chaos after a man.

"I'm not going back there. I'd rather kill myself right now than go back," he said emphatically.

A muscle in Asari's jaw twitched. He wasn't

Tomoyuki, his emotionless presence twinkling in his eyes like hot coals... he began, but Tomoyuki cut off.

"You weren't."

Tomoyuki thought he might cry. He thought back again and gazed at Asari. It was tragic that he had to love the man that he loved so much.

"Gensho," Zeller murmured. He glanced back.

Tomoyuki then turned his eyes on Asari. His voice grew stronger, demanding. "Have you ever considered Tomoyuki's feelings?"

Asari's expression initially became icy. Even he then started to look blue. Tomoyuki turned his eyes away. Whenever he looked at Asari, he wanted to run to Asari's side, to embrace him and make his own mistakes all over again.

But then everything he'd done to get here would have been for nothing.

Zeller kept pressing his attack. "I feel sorry for Tomoyuki. You must know that there will be no peace for him here in Madras. You, the cold-headed and self-centered Asari, at least should have taken this man to port his nation even-considering what that will do to him. The public would jump all over Tomoyuki. It's not like you'll get to carried away with your emotions that you can't think of something so obvious."

Asari was silent. He had probably never let his hair sold off by someone else, and he had no response. He pressed his lips together, deep wrinkles forming his forehead.

Tomoyuki decided to break in, unable to sit there

like this. He didn't want to watch Aseel be degraded by Zafar.

"Zafar, that's..."

But Zafar went on. He studied his friend's expression as Aseel, ignoring the Japanese man's attempt to restrain him. I realize you realize that if anyone were to find out that Tameyuki was here, you would have to use his name. He has no influence with anyone here. He is just a Tameyuki slave. his presence in Madras will offend everyone.

Maybe Zafar wasn't actually doing this to protect Tameyuki, but rather to protect Aseel. He didn't really know very much about Tameyuki, after all.

Aseel didn't answer or say anything.

Zafar drew closer to his enemy and laid his hands on Aseel's shoulders, as if to assure that the power still didn't transcend after all that was said and felt in "You can't look him away for the rest of his life. His soul would crumble under the pressure. Yes, do you hear that, don't you?"

Aseel stared straight ahead, not responding to the harsh criticism. Zafar shook him, completely fed up.

Finally, Aseel opened his mouth slowly.

"Did Tameyuki come to ask you for help to go back to Japan?" he asked.

Zafar nodded eagerly. "That's right. He thought I might be able to do something. He was desperate. I want to help him."

Aseel never once looked at Tameyuki. He probably considered Tameyuki's fate from the



woman's quarters and his reliance on Zefir as a cunning horseyol.

"As one of your countrymen, I beg you," Zefir continued. "You will be the one long, and I want every choice right now—here, or your friend Samir!"

Even horseyols thought Zefir's statement was outrageous. He swallowed and watched Aved.

Aved remained his silent, shivering emotion, but it was clear he wasn't deliberating about who to choose.

"This should be simple," Zefir said, pressing for an answer.

And Aved's lips were finally loosened.

"I suppose it is," he said slowly. Zefir returned to his face and the same old pain was in his eyes now. He had made his decision.

He turned his back on horseyols. That was his answer.

"To show my appreciation, why don't I let horseyols stay at my house until the wedding and coronation?" Zefir asked. "I think that would be best for you, too, Aved."

There was no Aved could face reality. Confronted if he was confronted with the reality of their separation, he would have to deal with it.

Aved left the room without another word. Horseyols stood staring after him. Aved had left without him, without ever looking back at him. Aved was showing that he didn't need horseyols anymore, now that he'd made his decision.

If horseyols wanted Zefir's help, he could get

him Zefir. And if he wanted to go back to Japan, he could go back. Horseyols could practically live. Aved's love telling him these things.

Which disappointing conclusion.

Even the result he thought he wanted, but when it actually came to pass, he was too shocked for words to know that he shouldn't be hurt, but the pain in his chest was real.

Zefir came up to horseyols with strong warning, if his door Aved had disappeared through placing his fingers against his temple. Zefir let out a sigh. "Victory."

He had said that as if he expected horseyols to betray him, and horseyols tried to answer with a smile, but his chest was twisted. He didn't understand it about. He should have been glad that his work was half-finished.

"Let's go to my house," Zefir suggested. "You can stay dressed as a small horseyol."

"Thank you," you've done so much for me!" horseyols said like words mechanically, his mouth making the motions of politeness. All he could see was smoke back.

It was done just like Zefir had said. Aved should never cling to horseyols again. There probably wouldn't even be a chance to see each other again, making him close together anymore.

"Don't mention it. I'm making myself poor by doing this," Zefir gave a slight smile. It made horseyols think there were certain kinds of suffering, suffering that only the royal family had known to

But Temoyala had her hands full right now, just managing his own feelings. He didn't know the *why*, but he was worried about Zafar's loss.

"I already gave Laila the orders," Laila continued. "You're an *an* confidence in her. So, she made so we'll get you back early. That's all."

They left Laila's house and headed to Zafar's. Zafar told them it would take as long for her to get there.

It seemed like so long ago that he had woken up in the east of the Same palace, but it didn't really seem that long at all. So much had happened! But nothing had changed. Temoyala had been alone. Laila, too, remained with him. And now he was alone again.

"You won't need to dress like a woman in my house. Of course, if you want to, but that's not the way. You can also leave there, so don't worry yourself as much."

Zafar's suggestion was a welcome one. The man was probably going to make sure that Temoyala didn't get too depressed. But Temoyala was so excited to thank him properly. He could only look at her gratefully.

"You're not married?" Temoyala asked.

He knew nothing about Zafar, so he just said that he was. And Laila's house was so good and good to her for the time. He didn't even know how old Zafar was.

"My younger brother married and he's already given the family as a girl. So, my father has made him go up as a son. Sooner or later I'll probably get

enough, but for now I'm enjoying my bachelorhood."

Laila said:

If only Arsal had had brothers, his position would have been different. If he were a son for the house, Temoyala would have been the one to marry. He would have been the one to marry. There wasn't much point in waiting for the right woman. Arsal would be married in a month and he'd be a son. But he couldn't help fantasizing about it.

Zafar's house was on the outskirts of Madaya.

The grounds were amazing. It was not the best, with a row of the horses. There were many more like this in the center of the city, but it was just as good as the surroundings. It was full of energy.

Temoyala had noticed that the garden in Madaya was water and greenery. It was more beautiful than Zafar's house was so beautiful.

The car pulled to a stop in the driveway. Zafar and Temoyala got out and a garage door swung open. It was obviously a garage, but it was very different from the garage Temoyala had seen before—there were more than 10 cars in the garage. He felt as if he was in a car show. Zafar was a car enthusiast. And now he was

in everything was his to do with as he pleased.

They crossed the house directly from the garage. There was a foyer on the other side of the entrance. It was an elevator that ran up to the second floor. It went into the living room, and Temoyala was amazed by its extravagance. Sofas were lined up one after another. All of the cushions were still in the

was dozens of gold. They took a spiral staircase at the back up to the second floor, passing sometimes down as they walked down the hall.

"Use whatever room you want," Zafu offered.
 "You're welcome to come to my room, too."

He walked and Tomoyuki gave a pointed look.
 "Thank you, there is time."

He pointed to a door that looked promising.
 When Zafu opened the door, he saw a well-made, looking room that he supposed was he'd had in Seta.

"The bedroom is over there," Zafu said.

"Thank you so much. That is," Tomoyuki nodded off.

Zafu squatted rudely at him. "It's a little early to be thinking me. You're going to regret going up there."

"It's a little late for that," Tomoyuki said softly.

Behind plenty of eggs already, and then would probably never go away. But he would have expected sweeping away's rule too. He didn't know which was better. He probably wouldn't know for a long time.

"That too to see anything you. And to let I won't mind. Also," Zafu pushed a button on the room's telephone. There was a knock on the door and then an older man appeared. "This is Hayd. If there's anything you need, let him know. He can help you about anything. That includes when you're happy." Hayd, then is Tomoyuki's a good friend, is he?

Tomoyuki closed his eyes and groaned for a moment.
 "It's a pleasure to meet you."

He extended his hand and Hayd returned the grip.

"The first thing is clothing," Hayd said.
 "What would you like?"
 "Yes."

Now that he'd mentioned it, Tomoyuki realized that he was still dressed like a woman. Hayd didn't so much as look at Tomoyuki's scarlet hair. He just a placed nap down. "Allow me."

Tomoyuki watched, and Hayd looked down very quickly then left the room. He must have been talking to Tomoyuki's roommates.

"Hayd can get a pretty good fit just by looking at you," Zafu shrugged. "But he looked at it, I think he was wondering what you look like naked."

Hayd was returned with a change of clothes in hand. Tomoyuki thanked him and accepted the new shirt and slacks he'd brought.

"Once you've changed, would you like to have a look around?" Zafu asked.

Tomoyuki wasn't sure how to respond to the question. He didn't feel much like sightseeing.

"Thank you, but I don't think I will," he finally answered.

Zafu checked his watch. "Well, just get yourself off you say that up now. You should be able to see outside. Maybe it's such a beautiful city. But I'll let you have a look at it for you."

Zafu was right. Going outside might cheer him up a little. Tomoyuki changed his clothes the second time, accepting the services gratefully. "Thank you very much."

"Of course. Would you like to see something

first? Maybe, it looks ready?"

"Yes, sir."

Harold left the man with a disappointed good-bye, and Zuko sat down on an easy chair against the wall.

"I'd like to change," Tomyoka said.

Despite the obvious implication that he *could* be alone, all Zuko did was give a shrug. (1) He, of Tomyoka's conviction that the bathroom was *not* a place to fix one's hair and he thought about going into the main room to change, but decided not to. It would be a violation of Zuko's rule from change.

He dropped the woman's slippers and pulled on the pants and shoes. He felt more relaxed just being a man's clothes, spent and his mind improved.

Zuko glanced up at him. "Can you do something?"

Tomyoka agreed, making himself to the room—which came immediately after Zuko's last question: "Are you gay?"

The man couldn't have asked Tomyoka something more impulsive if he had tried. And as for the other watching him change clothes, what could he do except that Zuko was a useful man?

It caught Tomyoka off-guard.

"Did it embarrass you to watch me change?" he asked evenly.

Zuko nodded. "Are you even a little bit conscious of men watching you?"

"Unfortunately I've never in my entire life had a man of mine looking at me," Tomyoka answered.

—With one exception: that is

when honey-colored eyes were on him, his just mood partially lost.

"Then why were you with Aoi?" Zuko asked.

The question stopped Tomyoka short. Why had he been attracted to Aoi if he wasn't gay? He was *just* involved by the question and he didn't find an answer.

He had wanted to clear the air when he'd returned to Aoi, and he had been prepared for a logical battle. But amazingly his partner had yawned off his head; he thought Aoi would accept him, so he had left somehow when Aoi had returned his feelings. And everything that happened after had just been more and more incredible. "Flaming in cloud water" was the only way to describe what it had been like back then.

"You know what Aoi is like?" Zuko said. He was fixed, if only for a moment, from the strict, serious and heavy responsibility of the court. It's not of the incredible that he would have some romantic partners while he was studying abroad. And as long as Aoi was going to find out, it was probably less trouble to tell him than. A woman could come back to have him later.

Tomyoka hardly understood what Zuko was going to say. The man thought that Tomyoka had *not* been gay.

Certainly, he had been the one to confess his feelings. He couldn't deny that. But his feelings had been those of longing. He'd loved Aoi so much that he wanted to get to know him better, but he hadn't thought of trying past that.

But in any case Akemi's sex appeal was the reason that they'd begun a physical relationship. Akemi knew exactly how charming he would be, and he had impressed Tomoyuki with his own little sex and pleasure.

"If I wanted you with my head, what could you do?"

Akemi had gazed at him with smoothness, eyes and Tomoyuki had taken his outstretched hand, as if a spell had been cast over him.

If only he hadn't confessed his feelings, or he hadn't taken Akemi's hand. But no matter how much he regretted the past, there wasn't anything he could do about it now.

"Oh God." Zafu's mouth twisted and he shook his head. He rubbed his temples and groaned under his nose. "It's a shame you were going to give him the fat on your face, I wouldn't have asked."

Tomoyuki gave Zafu a wary look. "I'm not looking so unattractive."

"It's all over now. More importantly, I'm a little hungry." He extended Zafu with a purposeful countenance. He didn't want to continue discussing this.

"Oh, don't you?"

They left Tomoyuki's room and walked to the dining room. A chandelier of pure gold was hanging in the elegant spacious room and a magnificent red velvet sofa sat in the corner.

A procession of sumptuous food was brought in for their "break." There was a soup with many different varieties of beans in it, a tomato and olive salad,

steamed fish, cream-mashed chicken and vegetables. An assortment of fruits including lemon prepared for them.

"Is there something in particular you'd like to eat?" Zafu asked, referring to the eight-course after-dinner meal.

"Maybe the market," Tomoyuki suggested after some thought.

"Does anything else?" The man took a sip, a woman, he knew? The corners of Zafu's mouth were lifted up by his grin. "You've already taken the desert here."

Tomoyuki glanced at the juke. He didn't like being reminded about how he had foolishly run out into the street by himself and wound up at the hospital.

He picked. He was thinking about Akemi. She, at least here, the way her honey-colored eyes twinkled when he laughed, his gaze, his long fingers. The Akemi before he had met her was the Akemi of ten years ago, but the Akemi of today. When his hands trembled and lifted him, he was beautiful—more striking, more lively than anyone else.

A ripple ran through Tomoyuki's body as he thought of Akemi. He couldn't win in his emotions. They were flowering more and more wildly as he began to realize that it was all over. The wonderful love turned to ash in his mouth. He felt bad for putting Zafu in such a predicament.

When they finished eating, they went right to bed. He promised. Tomoyuki had been all desire to go to bed by that point, and the presence of the dinner and the bed depressed him even more. That he couldn't look at Akemi, and he was already clambered into the back seat.

"Madras is a truly beautiful country," Zafar said. "The peasants enjoy the luxury of the harvest and, as you see, not then the next day they can become distant workers. And we're one of the world's leading oil producers. Do you know that? Only the royal family was allowed to use oil fields in Madras. No matter how much they use, no one can get their hands on the oil if they're not part of the royal family."

As he listened to Zafar, Tomoyuki pressed against the hot breeze raising his cheeks. It would have been wonderful to visit this country as a tourist.

Ironstone of Madras's wealth was clear when Of course the second grade were well kept, but a glacial shower that money flowed freely, too, in the third quarters where people spent their lives: in the hospitals and welfare buildings and the housing areas. There was no sign of splendor anywhere, and the abundance of low white buildings hinted that the people were reluctant to spend the money. The state palaces that surrounded the city were also well cared for.

Madras was exceptional, even among its United Nations nations. Everything related to education and welfare was completely free, something other countries found difficult to maintain.

This was Azadi's country. He was born and raised in this beautiful land.

Tomoyuki saw Azadi's image—emphatically unforgettable—whenever he closed his eyes. Once he left Madras, he would never be able to come back. He worked to engrave the image as it a memory.

Then, prepared into the desert.

Inside the jeep, absorbed by the clouds of that it picked up. Tomoyuki tilted his head at Zafar curiously. "I thought we were going to the market."

"The store was sitting in the back area of the jeep, waiting for us, looking out of the window at the market. 'We are. This will be your second trip, won't it?'"

"My second trip?"

He suddenly realized that Zafar was going to leave.

"Why are you doing that?" He turned into Zafar's surprised face and got a light-hearted smile in return.

"Wouldn't have any you are in looking, I don't see any other reason. You saw the beauty of Madras. Now I want to show you the dark corners of my beloved country."

Tomoyuki didn't understand what Zafar was doing to accomplish. He had nothing but horrible memories of Zafar, but he knew if he asked to go somewhere that he would only be ignored.

Now the window stood between him and the city he had seen only a few short days before. They were a crowd, a steady-crowd hidden in the desert.

The town was built in the foothills and lay, in the Zafar's words, within Madras's horizon, but hidden from it. Zafar was far removed from the quiet image people had of Madras. The citizens of Madras probably preferred that other countries not even know the town existed.

The jeep went rapidly through the intricate streets. That just passed from others Zafar came to the

place. But why would he come here if he thought it was shady? This place was reputable. Zeller was stingy.

A chill ran down Totomsky's spine while he caught sight of the hooded. They got out of the car and Zeller walked into the building, an air of long experience in his stride, and Totomsky followed able here.

They saw Kadon in the same room as before.

"Well, it's our unexpected guest again," Totomsky greeted.

A roughen sat on the table. Kadon, who had apparently been counting bills, replaced the box, hid and looked it before he stood up and walked toward them. His sharp eyes were caught itself. He didn't seem to fully trust the fact that Zeller had brought him to good here.

"No. I'm just going home this time," Zeller said.

As Zeller and Kadon conferred, Totomsky finally saw clearly that they were holding each other in check.

"There must be better places to talk left engineering," Kadon growled.

Zeller must have been something of a double-edged sword for Kadon. It was good for business that it showed of the royal family patronized by hooded, but on the other hand, Zeller was also a hooded. No matter what Kadon did, he had to be aware of Zeller's watchful eyes.

"Really?" I think this is one of Michael's hoodlums," Zeller said casually, ignoring Kadon's stare.

Kadon had no response to that.

A glow erupted from somewhere off to their

"Is that a show?" Zeller asked.

Kadon nodded, his face smacking in a tale

"In other circumstances, our guest might have — as a way to now."

Totomsky looked from Kadon's slip aside. He could begin to understand how a prosperous country like Madon could allow a place like Zynski to exist.

Zeller gave a dry laugh. "You should I joke about that. As a hoodlum I find it very funny. Or do you wish to run joking Cylor with Shook Awe if?"

He threw Kadon a warning look with his sharp, smoldering eyes.

"Don't be ridiculous," Kadon shook his head. "I wouldn't dream of contradicting his majesty. I just thought I'd hazard a little joke with you, since you're late so generous in your patronage."

The room was filled with an uneasy atmosphere, and the exact exchange had occurred many times before.

Kadon nodded politely, then pushed up the wall and went to the door. "Make yourself at home. But if we'll excuse me."

Totomsky regarded the door Kadon had gone through calmly.

"Do you want to see the show?" Zeller inquired.

Totomsky ignored the invitation immediately. "No. That's hardly."

He wasn't going to harbor Zeller. Kadon had looked the last honor of the brother.

"Once I get into an army hospital, I'll be able to see the world. No one will ever be able to find them again. A shadow of despair ran down his spine at the memory."

He'd always heard that Madras's education and western systems were equal for everybody. But when he went on it, Ziyad wanted to contradict that.

"Yes, you would look down on that world as you?" Zafir said. This place gives food to the most headstrong of the entire country. Ziyad is what is known as an extraordinary region."

He can't control things here," Tomoyuki added.

The king of Madras had absolute power. As the king's secretary, Tomoyuki thought that Ziyad would shut the book down.

"You run the market, don't you?" Zafir's voice clouded over. "The people of Ziyad suffer a death in distress from the book. It's been that way for hundreds of years. I've also heard people say that king is a Ziyad used to rule Madras. It's not easy to control Ziyad and Madras has never managed to conquer it."

He spoke without emotion—Ziyad wasn't a western type anymore. That was a sign of how long it was taking the problem of Ziyad really was.

"Ziyad used to come here when you were. Zafir continued. "If people had found out that he was in the desert was visiting the Ziyad brother. It would have done him any favors politically, but he was too busy."

"And so now you come to help him," Tomoyuki asked. "But you're really too late, aren't you?"

"It's much less of a problem for everyone that you and I are worlds apart, as far as our relationship goes, isn't it?"

Tomoyuki felt like he could tell where they were going. Maybe that was why Zafir had brought him on.

Zafir added. "Food is an important issue, not only for Madras, but for the Eastern nations as well. It's the only one capable to become long who won't be the eyes away from the darkness in Madras."

A bigger issue than even famine outside. There isn't the slightest trace of guilt in the western's eyes—just pure excitement. The show must have ended to them. Tomoyuki could just see Madras's smiling face.

"You're a great man, aren't you?" Tomoyuki said.

Zafir's face hardened, as if he had taken Tomoyuki's words for granted.

The Japanese man continued, "I really believe that. I mean, you could have just opened a foreigner like in Madras. I saw that anything. And I could have taken the book with me without any problems, but you made me to put me up."

Zafir clenched a tiny bit. "He didn't have any choice but to give up," he replied briefly. His voice was cold as he stared off into space. It sounded like he was going to burst out.

Tomoyuki looked away. "Can we have more?" The place makes me uncomfortable."

He left the book and walked toward the car.

street of Zafra. The road had picked up a cloud of whirling sand. He walked on, looking straight ahead. What else could he do?

Chapter Five

The entire country was alive with the historic atmosphere that had to tone down their boisterous celebrations for the new king's marriage and coronation out of respect for Madina's current king, who lay on his deathbed. But as the day approached, the uncontrolled enthusiasm of the masses was visible everywhere in the city.

Flags hung from the fronts of hotels and stores and people were selling home-made souvenirs to commemorate the occasion. With three days to go, everyone was talking about the day would be a national holiday. Some people were even working to make the date a permanent annual holiday.

Newspapers had gathered from local and foreign reporters to capture the moment when Madina's new king would be crowned. The media battle was slowly heating up to what hot intensity, every radio station and newspaper offered nothing but news about the wedding. Naturally, there were tight security in place and those locations that could be used had been designated long before hand.

The streets of Madina, closed town groups and Madina's biggest mosque, where the wedding and coronation would be held, were all open to reporters.

As well as the king's palace, which would be the big celebration afterwards. But no matter how many showed up at the mosque or the palace on the actual day of the event.

It then continued to the joyous mood of the population. Madina's government was tiny. Some women were upset that border clerics had been made much smaller in anticipation of the big event.

"It's just going to get worse," Zahir said, waving at you hand. He pulled out from his home, shaking his head with fatigue. "By next week, VIPs from your country as the world are going to be at Madina to meet the king. The anti-monarchy groups are, mobilizing their forces, so we won't be able to put police, and stop the celebration."

"This is a golden opportunity for them," Tamsayala commented. "Even if they only show up at the mass reports, they could make a big impact."

Zahir smiled warmly at him. "What would you do if you were them, Tamsayala? Would you make the mosque where the ceremony was being held, or would you prefer the hotel hosting the party afterwards?"

It would have been natural to be troubled by the way Zahir had posed the question, but Tamsayala just had common thought. He found his answer before long.

"If it were me, I would strike the hotels where all the important people are staying, the day after the ceremony. Before they have time to recover."

Zahir smiled at him as he waved his hand. "You're evil."

"Well, they are anti-monarchy groups, aren't they?"

Tamsayala's, asked.

He had been staying at Zahir's home for the last days, and Madina's important event of a lifetime was just three days away. After the marriage at the mosque, they would be the coronation, and then Asad would officially be king.

"I see. And what are the groups' goals? Money? Personal power?" Zahir questioned.

"Free trade of the oil fields." Tamsayala guessed. "We are right that only the royal family can own them, but limited competition is the basis of capitalism."

"That won't work," Zahir said, brushing aside his idea. "Madina's royal family isn't just some symbol. With the promise of our nation. No one could be allowed to have a higher status than the king."

"It must be difficult for the royal family, too. I don't even imagine," Tamsayala mused.

If he owned the oil fields then that meant that as king, the king himself had to play hidden games with his world's super powers. He would negotiate abroad with his eye on protecting the interests of his own country. This country may have been rich in resources, but the king needed intelligence, endurance and great skill to protect it. If he lacked any one of these qualities, he wouldn't be able to serve his purpose.

There are a lot of groups, some pro-Asad, some pro-Zahir, and some others, Zahir confessed. "There's a lot of antagonism between them all. But I don't personally hate Asad. Actually, I feel sorry for him. There are more than a few hard-headed subjects of mine prejudiced against him just because

his mother was a Christian?"

Tomeyaku listened to the story in silence.

"There was a time when King Mōri was I sure what to do, rather. Aired has the right to that otherwise. But if he becomes king like this, by Marikō's royal fiat, the opposition will just become more radical. I worry that the government will be split in two. In Mōri, no one can force the king to abdicate. King Marikō watched Aired these last six years and finally decided that he was worthy. That's why Aired became a samurai."

Tomeyaku understood now why Aired had not contacted him once in all those years. Aired couldn't have done it no matter how much he might have wanted to—he was afraid Tomeyaku might get caught up in the politics, too. But once he was secure again, Aired had made his move.

Just to keep his promise that he would come back for Tomeyaku.

For the last six years, Mōri has indirectly had no king. Zafu continued, "In three days, that will be over and Mōri will get a fresh start with a new king. It is so great."

Tomeyaku gazed at him, sensing a far world of nervous in his quiet words.

Zafu exhibited some strange confidence. "I suppose there are several ways you could take that."

He turned his eyes from Tomeyaku back to the window. He didn't seem to want to continue the discussion, so Tomeyaku left Zafu in silence.

Three days left.

Did he want the day to come quickly or did he dread that it would never come? He couldn't tell. But whatever Tomeyaku wanted, the day would come.

All he could do was bide and await the day of a brief meeting from Aired.

The morning of the wedding came.

It was a special day for Mōri. The entire ceremony was on the edge of its seat, awaiting the birth of a new king. Tomeyaku knew it would be a day he wouldn't forget.

He planned to go with Zafu to the mansion when the marriage ceremony would be held. Naturally, for the heightened security, no one other than the royal family and some government officials would even be able to approach the building, let alone the foot roads. But Zafu had pulled some strings and arranged some special access.

But now that the moment had come, Tomeyaku's stomach was churning. He was having trouble staying still. He had been awake all night thinking, running over the long list of his doubts and regrets. For instance, why hadn't he gone back to Japan on his own? And why was he doing all alone in a place like this?

Only a few hours left.

In a few hours, time Aired would be married, and he would be king. He would move out of Tomeyaku's reach forever. The Japanese man had made a mistake once, but there was still a part of him

that listened, and was miserable.

Suddenly a call came from Satsum: were they his thoughts? She wanted to see them mixed with Zuko's confusion here. There was something else, a song to discuss.

Zuko was worried, wondering what Satsum could possibly have to say to them on the day of his wedding, but Tomyeiki had exhausted his supplies of anxiety. Why should anyone worry about Satsum, anyway? She was about to celebrate her marriage to Aoud and live out the rest of her life as his wife.

"Let's go, Tomyeiki."

Zuko led Tomyeiki outside. They were a couple the morning two hours ahead of schedule.

"You go by yourself. I'll wait here."

"Satsum asked for you to come too," Zuko replied, hurrying Tomyeiki along. Apparently he wanted Tomyeiki to suffer even more. Hapohobohi also wanted him to confirm the reality of the wedding, but Tomyeiki had had enough of hard evidence. He couldn't take any more.

He wanted, though he knew he was a child like a child. "Why should I? I'm Japanese—their is none of my business." He had lost all desire to do of the ceremony of the mosque.

"Get a hold of yourself," Zuko ordered calmly. He was Tomyeiki's ally, but he was also a member of the royal family. He wouldn't concern himself with the Japanese man's elaborate feelings for her. "I don't care how sorry you feel for yourself; you've gone. That's what Aoud wants."

The more emotion of Aoud's name rendered Tomyeiki speechless. He couldn't believe that Aoud would want him to stand. The man was going to everything he could to hasten him there.

He had the energy to react Aoud's abuse.

"Come on, now. This is the whole reason you came to Melese, isn't it? To witness this day." Zuko stepped back on the shoulder as he climbed him, and Tomyeiki slowly lifted his lowered eyelashes.

Zuko was right. He had to pull himself together whenever else happened today, it would all finally be over. However painful it might be for him, he had to stand the wedding and see Aoud for himself. He had to see the reality of Aoud's new life with his own eyes. If he didn't, the suffering of those last six years would just come back all over again.

Tomyeiki turned to the mosque with Zuko.

They waited in a side room, away from the wedding area for the royal family. Satsum appeared almost instantly. She still hadn't changed in her bridal dress. Tomyeiki was relieved by Satsum's lack of response; she was happy enough to delay the night of Aoud's bride.

"I need to talk to you," she said urgently.

What in the world could she want to talk about? She was in the room there, her face had hardened with that determination.

"What's going on?" Zuko asked.

Satsum remained distracted. She didn't seem to have heard Zuko's question. But a few moments later, she turned her eyes on Tomyeiki: her jaw tense.

Zafar: "There's someone else that I love. I always get a shudder from feelings, but they refused to disappear. And yet you still want me to marry Aweel and to raise children?"

Zafar's face was a picture of agony. It was the man that Tomoyuki knew. He knew Zafar as a detached man, philosophical towards everything.

It was then that Tomoyuki understood better: was that Samara really loved.

Zafar knew it, too. He must have felt it. In a way she did.

—He didn't love one person but he accepted.

Everything in Zafar's heart was laid before the single woman.

"It's too late," he whispered still looking at Samara, but his voice cracked.

It pained Tomoyuki to see how sadistic the man was struggling to contain his own emotions.

As royalty, Zafar had no choice. He worked for the country and its people. His first priority was not what was best for the country, not for his own creation. Aweel, Zafar, and Samara had all been born into a royal royalty and the importance of the royal family's role had no doubt been instilled in them since they were children.

But Samara said that she wouldn't give up her love. Zafar was struggling with indecision. And finally, he had been keeping himself with selfish pursuits: kidnapping Tomoyuki even though he knew he wouldn't win.

Maybe Tomoyuki hadn't understood anything



about those people. It must take an awfully long time to lay those lines.

He had accused Asei of being selfish and arrogant, but the man hadn't been acting on a whim, determination. He must have given the matter a great deal of thought and agonized over his eventual decision. The result of that had been to kidnap the Japanese girl and bring her to Madras, which seemed so foolish on the surface.

Asei had said he'd done it to fulfill his promise to Tomoyuki, but that wasn't the only reason. He wanted to live someone like his father and serve, to be happy independent of his obligations as the heir.

Tomoyuki returned some indignance. "It's foolishness to let your parents arrange your marriage on the day and age," he said. "Even if you realize that foreign and marry Asei, you're never going to be happy with someone you don't like."

He knew how much it was for him as a son of a noble to offer his opinion.

But marriage supposed to be made by both you and her?

No matter what country a person is from, whether they're royalty or peasants, they're all human beings.

I think you need to tell Asei right now. It's suggested. I'm sure he'll understand the situation if something so that no one gets hurt.

He knew Asei would put Sasaki's feelings first, even if it meant putting himself at a disadvantage.

He would worry about Sasaki's happiness as a human being, even if she was a member of the royal family. He would be unable to leave what he wanted himself. But he would fight Sasaki her desires previously desired. He was determined to win.

I have a better idea, Sasaki told Tomoyuki.

Oh. What's that?

He realized that they were only now reaching, and again she had called him there.

I want you to take my place.

"Take your place?" he repeated, unconvinced.

Sasaki explained in a clear voice, "I want you to take Asei in my place to avoid causing an uproar."

Sasaki had shocked Tomoyuki into silence when he announced that she didn't want to get married. But she had been nothing compared to his reaction now.

Oh, do you know what you're saying? You can't be serious. He shouted, fully rejecting the idea. Not knowing just how serious the young woman was made it all the more impossible to consider her proposal.

I mean, very well, Sasaki stated. "If we call off the wedding, they won't go on to put off the wedding happened and go ahead with Asei's situation. By agreeing that the case we have to make everything continues as planned."

"Maybe not."

This was taking things much further than he was expecting a man in order to escape the palace. He only would be he discovering the royal family and the court officials, but Asei himself. Tomoyuki

couldn't do it. It was unreasonable.

"I think you should talk to Aazel first," he said.

Samara lowered her eyes sadly at that suggestion.

There's no time."

"Come on," Tomoyuki pleaded.

"What would Aazel think? How would it affect her reputation? This would be effectively, rubbing it in on the back."

"I'm not going back."

As Samara said that, the door between their rooms and the reception area opened. Lady Zofia, carrying the leader's clothes. They were dressed, with the high-crowned or apples of golden thread. Through the ornate doorway, the crown would be placed over the dish.

"I can't do that," Tomoyuki said adamantly.

"But didn't you agree that it was necessary to be wary against my will?" Samara asked.

Tomoyuki hesitated. "Yes, but..."

Samara didn't back down. Her decision was final and she would allow no further treatment of the subject.

"Just me," she said. "Everything will be fine. We have to do what we know is right. Otherwise, we'll only live to regret it."

Samara...

Her struggle of will amazed him.

Zofia was still completely silent, a grim look frozen on her face. He was out of his depth now.

Normally, Tomoyuki would never allow her to proceed. It was no longer prudent to say that the crown was

available, by itself. But if Samara was having second thoughts now, then they would all regret the moment when she had to do what he could never.

Samara's determination overwhelmed Tomoyuki. He couldn't turn her down just because he didn't want to. He stood there, unable to move or think of what he could say. Samara gave up and stepped out to work.

"Excuse me," Lady's fingers rested on one of the buttons of Tomoyuki's shirt.

"I gave up," Zofia let out a long, deep sigh. He looked at his old self. He must have shrugged off his worries, at last. The look of agony had disappeared, left behind.

"Zofia..."

Samara gazed at him, her eyes starting to tremble with an expression like that on the young woman's gentle face. Zofia couldn't help but be moved. He was after all the one that she loved. He could hold a peaceful resolve as well.

"You say you were never able to stand up against your father," he said finally, with a smile.

Samara was a woman who could change Madara and the royal family. The first step was for her to marry the person she loved.

Tomoyuki returned his comments and helped Zofia to put on a pointed shawl on.

The clothes swirling around her body were arranged in such a way that the difference between her appearance and Samara's was almost invisible. It was so strangely comfortable, and somehow the hair fell to

Specify the right length, almost as if it had been made
for him.

The workmanship was so beautiful that a
commanded admiration. Countless people picked out a
rose pattern on the white silk. No other person had been
used in order to better highlight the perfection. A large
emerald surrounded by pink diamonds.

Even on a man like Tomoyuki the effect was
breathtaking.

"It's quite a piece of work!" A's brother
Tomoyuki got up and down as if the Japanese man had
become a whole new person. "It looks perfect on you.
That's impossible!"

Tomoyuki reddened as Zaku let out a laugh. He
glared at Zaku and Samura but then he smiled. "I don't
like being applying makeup with words *gyaku* like
him when he had impersonated the man!"

"Come here!"

When everything was finished, they had left to
a room. Tomoyuki didn't recognize himself. He looked
like a completely different person.

"You may be even more beautiful than I am!"
Zaku teased.

Samura stared at her beloved. "I hope you don't
mean that."

He no just a piece of meat. A's brother
looked his hands, embracing his surrender to *gyaku*'s
grumpiness.

Tomoyuki had come this far but now his soul
overtook him again. He shuddered to think that he would
have to stand in front of A's brother like this. He felt like

as he said it was just him of his best he had wanted
to be, the extremely would go exactly as planned.

But what about afterwards? What would A's
brother be found out? Tomoyuki couldn't imagine
him was committing a horrible crime.

He turned away from the reflection in the mirror
and looked back at Samura. "I'm sorry... I can't..."

Before he could finish, Samura cut him off. "If
you refuse, I'll be forced to commit suicide right here
today, would cause A's brother greater shame than that.
The leader can turn off while the entire world was
watching, he wouldn't be able to become king and he
could be a laughingstock for the rest of his life."

Tomoyuki shook with terror. Whatever else
happened, he couldn't let her do that to the man he
loved. He was wrapping his arms around himself for
the moment when's brother came. "Hush! Hush!" He caught
himself by pulling the silk sash across his face. Samura
quickly left the room.

The door opened. It was A's brother in full formal
clothes.

Samura sprang up in the room the instant he
heard. The presence of a king changed the entire
atmosphere. Tomoyuki's breath caught at the unexpected
visit of A's brother and he felt as if his heart might give
out.

A's brother wore a translucent blue jewel on the
center of his white shirt. Four designs in gold thread
decorated his cuffs, and a short sword studied
in diamonds and large jade stones were hanging

at his lap – it momentarily provoked them because he knifed.

He walked into the room so majestically accompanied by his guards – that he looked like a king straight out of the movies.

He was so broad-shouldered, so overflowing, such was that Tomyaku gasped.

‘I couldn’t wait any longer,’ Avel said. ‘I had to see you. You look wonderful. Even half-wild Madara would melt beside my heels.’

Tomyaku felt dizzy. He meant to quite and – it was because Avel was standing before him as before, his stance was weighing so heavily on his mind. His heart was racing and his entire body shook – straight down to his fingertips.

Zafir caught Tomyaku’s arm as he staggered.

Avel strode up to them and pulled Taw with away from Zafir.

‘You will not be so forward with us,’ he growled.

Avel stared Zafir down. Zafir removed his hands from Tomyaku and held them up in surrender.

Tomyaku panicked. Avel’s arm was wrapped around his shoulders. He could hardly breathe. Avel believed that he was Sarnus. This knowledge made it even more difficult for him.

‘Come,’ Avel’s eyes fell on Tomyaku.

The Japanese man couldn’t return the look he received from Avel’s wild, honey-colored eyes. He lowered his eyelashes as Avel placed a finger on his forehead.



"Little more than his waist, what taking, taking, gathering, and so on. He would have to watch from the closest possible vantage as Aired declined his tea, the Squire and took but as best he'd."

And once everything was revealed, Aired would hardly grill Tomoyuki. Tomoyuki would have to try to rough himself in whatever time he remained. If Aired asked him why no one had contacted him about this late last, he wouldn't have an answer.

He could say it was for Squire, but as he knew Squire would be furious with having to be misled himself. But even so, he wanted to coach in the late play.

He was trying to approach the public, or logically, but he feared the other man's anger more than anything else. If Aired ever hated him, he was crafty, just thinking about it.

Tomoyuki feared to hear Aired agree, even if it meant everything.

"Aired—"

But Aired himself stopped him.

"My friends. Aired arrived at them already, also, with details. Everything will end today and begin again. That's poured to me."

A pain shot through Tomoyuki's heart at the sweet words whispered into his ear. Everything would indeed end for him today, but there would be no new beginning.

"Let's go."

Aired pressed his hand against Tomoyuki's back, still ensuring that anything was aware. Tomoyuki

was standing very forward. There was nothing else to do.

Before they left the room, Aired addressed without turning around.

"You should watch the ceremony. You might get some ideas, but you are not to leave before it is over."

"Is that the long order?" Zeller turned back and gazed.

"Yes," Aired said flatly.

Zeller left silent and they left the room.

They were surrounded by guards on either side. Tomoyuki could only follow where Aired led.

Aired stopped in front of the room prepared for the bride. "We must part briefly, but we'll be together in a moment."

Aired looked at Tomoyuki with a silent command. He was in separate for his wedding day, already, on the other hand, though his heart would

There was still some time before the ceremony. He would have nothing to do until then, but just the feeling, instead by his regret.

So, after my bride, Aired directed Leda, was standing off to one side. Leda seemed slightly different, given so many here.

At that moment, completely unconscious of the of his own guards or those stationed outside the room, Aired gazed passionately at Tomoyuki—

to him, this was Squire—and best close to him. "When you take off your bridal clothes, I pray you'll be waiting," Aired whispered.

Tomoroko had his lip. If his father, he might reveal that he was not Samsan.

There was no going back now. All he, could do was play the role of the leader in the face of his children. And at the same time, he would carve every detail of Azari and his identity to his memory.

He would never be able to forget Azari's memory, as he wanted to remember just a little bit more. This way, he would have more than just painful memories of his deep love and his memory together.

Chapter Six

The mosque was ancient.

Only the royal family of Madras, high ranking officials, and the royalty seemed from other Islamic states were allowed to enter. The marriage ceremony was with ceremony and beauty.

A red carpet stretched its way between the rows stretching up to the door. Tomorrow followed it at night's light.

Light from the sun streamed in through the square stained glass windows in arches, creating a warm and Tomorrow was caught in a fresh wave of air. Describing an entire congregation in a holy place. It was as a dangerous thing to do.

Madras pillars, each five meters in diameter, supported the high domed ceiling over a sea of blue tile. The mosque made the place seem even more ethereal.

The walls, the mosque's religious leader, began speaking out against the Sultan about marriage. The Sultan repeated after him, seeking the agreement of the bride and groom to the marriage.

Tomorrow's words of counsel and Tomorrow's stated him as a law man.

Azari needed respect. He would make a noble king. If only Tomorrow hadn't come into his

life, God would have blessed him as the poor old king.

Tomoyuki knew he would be punished. He was blaspheming against God. He knelt down, the urge to atone for himself right there, in the middle of the marriage ceremony.

They moved on to the ceremony.

The couple placed acetown over Arai's head and a sheet draped over the audience like a collective sigh of relief. The music then placed a crown on Tomoyuki.

They were led to a pair of thrones and sat down together.

This was the moment of the new king's birth.

A feeling of reverent awe suffused up inside the temple. Everything was reborn on this day, at that moment. It was the beginning of a new history in Madara.

Everyone's eyes followed the new king and they forgot even to breathe.

In the rippling silence, Arai quietly stood up.

"If in all my heart, I thank you," he whispered to the new king, "be remembered."

His eyes swept over the audience as he raised his solemn hands. They watched him hang his head, their breath wondering what the new king would tell them.

Arai drew out his words. "I will now perform my first act as king. As all of you are aware, there are certain rights exclusive to the king. One of them is the right of absolution—the ability to decide for myself when I will give up the throne."

There was a disturbance in the air. No one

quite dead, but a murmur was spreading through the temple. Tomoyuki was as confused as they were. He could hear what Arai was doing. The only person here who knew what was going on was Arai.

The man's expression never changed, but throughout the ceremony. "I hereby declare my abdication. There is no reason only. I must sit a man before life is his. Madara's king then."

Tomoyuki wanted to call out to Arai, but his voice was stuck in his throat. All he could do was watch in wonder that he saw before him. There wasn't as much as a flicker of doubt on the man's eyes as he faced the audience.

"Zafar al-Bashari"

Sitting in the front row, Zafar's eyes opened. He was the only one surprised. Everyone else seemed a impossible to believe what was happening.

No questions or arguments came forward. Not a single voice was audible. The room was as silent as a tomb. "I have been thinking," the announcement had said.

Arai stepped down from the throne, leaving the crown resting on its cushioned seat. A look told Tomoyuki to do the same. Without being fully aware of what he was doing or why, he removed the crown from his own head.

Arai stretched his hand out to him. "Come, my friend."

Tomoyuki's eyes widened at the name.

"Arai."

"Of course, your hand," Arai said.

He didn't need to be asked twice. Tomoyuki, as his trembling hand slipped Akane's, laid a leather arm on Akane's knee over the other man's foot. He squeezed Tomoyuki's hand tightly as he went. Together, they crossed back over the red carpet with dignified steps.

He was tried to stop them. Everyone simply watched them go by as a show.

When they were outside Akane opened the passenger door of a car, which he had obviously prepared in advance. "Get in," he said.

Tomoyuki looked from Akane to the car and back, hesitating. When the man had just then had no doubt surrounded not only all of Madara, but most of the world as well.

Akane, you . . . you have to go back. "No," he said. "Why are you doing this?"

His mind was in complete chaos. It was natural of him to long to elaborate immediately after being arrested. But that hadn't gotten him anywhere.

"You want to know why?" Akane's voice was full of anger. "It's not obvious?" I know exactly what's most important to me."

"Akane." Tomoyuki blinked his eyes rapidly. He was convinced that he must be dreaming.

"Get in, quickly," Akane ordered.

He pressed his hand to Tomoyuki's back, and Tomoyuki climbed into the passenger's seat, despite his uncertainty.

Akane shut the door, then got into the driver's

seat.

"I wanted how to drive after I got back from

abroad," he explained.

He pressed down on the accelerator. He seemed unconcerned about it.

As they roared out of the manager's parking lot, they passed through a cluster of bushes, then through a gate. There was nothing, however, stopping at the entrance of a new lot.

They could never have imagined that their slightly crowded trip would be making his journey like this. The popovers and the mother's attention would be heavily distracted, and there no one would even see Akane's low-profile car anymore.

He was stopped the car as it came out of the driver. They left the building far behind, following behind a military escort vehicle. The vehicle leading them had apparently been notified in advance, and it guided them along smoothly.

Akane had just been the first to leave behind them. A military vehicle pulled over to the side of the road. A window rolled down and the driver waved them off with a salute.

Akane saw with Akane. Tomoyuki ran over what just happened in his mind. No matter how much he thought about it, he couldn't make sense of the man's

There was only one thing he was sure of--he

recommended Akane that he was famous.

Akane's face began to burn, but decided that

there would be better than words.

He pulled off the jacket and wiped, then rubbed his face with both hands, wiping off the makeup. He

places, with her for the ceremony. Sumire is, in fact, Zaka's wife, and I agreed to take her place out of respect for her feelings."

There he had confessed. He was ready to die, wasn't Aiko? After all, Aoi had just lost his throat, so this, he'd also lost his bride.

"I've known about Sumire and Zaka for a long time. They make a good couple. Aoi's wedding party, his handsome face undisturbed."

Tomoyuki hadn't expected that. He was disappointed.

Aoi had waited for a long time? So he, who'd been surprised. He didn't look the least bit upset by the news.

Aoi, I'm saying I invited you. Tomoyuki said. "You married me, thinking that I was Sumire."

Aoi frowned, as if he thought that Tomoyuki's explanation was unfair.

"A marriage is meant for people who love each other," he said.

Tomoyuki didn't answer.

"It would have been meaningless without a wife, my bride," Aoi added.

At the moment, he had stretched out his hand to Tomoyuki and called him "father." He had called Tomoyuki that since they were together in England. At that time, Tomoyuki wasn't sure if Aoi had just been calling out to his bride, or if he had been addressing him. But Aoi's words now dispelled all his doubts.

Aoi had known that it was Tomoyuki's intention from

"That day when Zaka asked me if I'd ever forgiven your feelings. I didn't have anything to say to myself." Aoi said. But at the same time, I realized something. There are people who can take my place acting, but there's no one who can take your place as a bride."

"Aoi."

"If you can't live here as a blacksmith, I'll just live outside, too." Aoi looked confident. This was such an important decision, but he was treating it so casually. Besides, I was so stupid that I wouldn't recognize my own back.

For the first time since they'd been brought back together, Aoi smiled at Tomoyuki just like he had when they were first together—a smile that revealed total happiness. It seemed that Sumire and Aoi had understood the entire thing.

"Are you going to say something?" Aoi asked.

Tomoyuki scratched up his eyebrows as he searched for a response.

"This is unfair," he finally said.

He was referring to Aoi. For throwing away everything just for love. And so was Tomoyuki, since he'd done nothing to stop him. For him, Tomoyuki was the one that Aoi had

"I completely agreed," he added.

He brought back the tears threatening to break out and took several deep breaths. He needed time to think that this was real. Otherwise, he would just feel that it was a love-sickness dream. And if it really turned out

to be a dream, he would never get over it this time.

"Tomeyaki!" Akemi showed the ear and pulled to the side of the road. The honey-colored clay, the Tomeyaki loved so much, fell on him. "I wonder if I'm able to live a day here without you."

He spread his hands out before Tomeyaki. "You won't be angry if I hold you in my arms?"

"Of course not," Tomeyaki replied, wrapping his arms around Akemi's back, squeezing them tight.

"I have nothing more," Akemi said. "I'm no longer a member of the royal family, and no longer a military police. You must be disgusted to be with such an ordinary man."

But Tomeyaki had never needed any of that. As long as Akemi at Marshfield was with him, that was enough.

"Any women's quarters?" Tomeyaki asked, voice faltering with excitement.

Akemi laughed softly at his ear. "Of course not. There's only one person I love."

Akemi's arms wrapped around his beloved's body at last. They tumbled up inside Tomeyaki's arms, his completely. He couldn't hold back his tears any longer. But he squeezed them as they rolled down his cheeks.

"What will we do now?" he asked. The air seemed somehow sweet at last.

"What should we do?" Akemi asked his. Overflowing with such happiness that it couldn't be contained any longer. He kissed Tomeyaki's cheek and murmured in a silver voice. "We can do anything, like be as free as the birds in the desert. My friends."



"I realize the name that he gave living beings in the world - only to Tomoyuki. The name was given, especially to name the person most precious to him in all the world."

"Tomoyuki didn't need anything but this. It was enough to give the happiness of being in each other's arms."

He gazed at the blue sky he saw every day from his shoulder. A pair of desert hawks could fly freely as birds like that, breathing their wings wide at peace, but he holding them back.

Nothing could stop them from going where they wanted.

Tomoyuki whispered the name of the most precious person to him that any other in the world.

"Aoi."



HEAVEN

Part 2: Heaven

He heard the sound of waves. Sometimes, the voices of children playing carried over to him.

Tomoyuki relaxed in a chair on the deck of their cottage, dozing peacefully below a large parasol. The sun curved his cheek like a bird's wing, lulling him into a deep sleep.

These last three months had been his heaven. That was the only thing he could compare them with. His biggest worry was that if it continued, his heart and body would swell beyond their capacity to contain such bliss.

"Tomoyuki."

He moved himself slightly, watching as his hand came up and felt fingers in his hair. "Yes?"

"A storm is coming."

"Oh, yes?"

Opening his eyes, he saw Avel standing in front of him. The former king of Madren, wearing an achromatic tunic and knee-length silk pants, had finally released some energy in the release. Boasting his status as the *South Purifier*. He was nearly his old self, the Avel that Tomoyuki had known in England.

"Oh, I see it," Tomoyuki uttered.

The sky had been a clear blue up till then, but distant thunder now accompanied the clouds that had

opened across the sky. Turning his eyes from the sky, he said to Ansel, "There's no sound, something is in his hand."

"Is that a letter? Who is it from?" he asked.

"Anita," was the reply.

"May I?"

Ansel nodded as he handed the letter to him. Tenebralis unfolded the paper and began to read the formal Arabic script.

When he read the events of the last month, that had exposed a fair amount of lies, but they had been surprised at how hard it had been for Anita to accept what had happened.

Tenebralis felt a nagging guilt as he read the letter. After Ansel's dramatic recantation of the story at his coronation, they had gone straight to the airport. They had touched down on the tiny island in the South Pacific. He had been surprised to find out that Ansel owned the island of 100 or so inhabitants, and that the main cause here over a year to disappear from the world.

"Anita is the only one who knows about this place," Ansel had confessed.

And just as he'd said no one seemed to notice that Ansel owned the island and, his brother or sister, no one came to visit them. The media also left them in peace. So Ansel was only reported on as was his sister, which is he said he generally laughed a lot.

"There's a need for this on August 1, 1981," she said. "People will only talk about you for so long, after all, or something?"

"Seventy-five days."

"That's right."

Maybe Ansel was naturally disposed toward his brother-in-law. Tenebralis knew that since she had made up her mind, he never again questioned or doubted—recent events had demonstrated that aspect of his personality, too.

Anita wrote about the various rumors that were circulating that Ansel was deathly ill, that he'd had a dispute with the rest of the royal family, that his death mother had been persecuted by Ansel's sister, and so he actually hated the royal family. But most shocking of all was the newspaper story proclaiming his disappearance with special editors that read like a detective novel. He'd gone back to his mother's native country. Or maybe since he was so strongly fond of Ansel, he'd gone there. Some country or other must have given him amnesty. And so on, and so on.

But the story never came, but maybe Anita's intention about him was.

But it was probably just a matter of time. Soon they would be crowning a new king. Anita's belief also confirmed that Zafra and Samson had been warned. She said that they fought from time to time, but seemed truly happy together.

The two had postponed their honeymoon, but eventually they had gone together to Zafra soon after the wedding. Samson had declared that she wanted to see with her own eyes that place that her husband lived in, after.

"I would be hard to divorce Ansel, all we can do is live a quiet life as much as possible in the outside world."